United Nations S/PV.5509

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5509th meeting

Wednesday, 9 August 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Nana Akufo-Addo	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/610)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-46071 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/610)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland, Guatemala, Guinea, India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2006/610, which contains a letter dated 3 August 2006 from Ghana addressed to the Secretary-General.

It is with considerable pleasure that I welcome all participants to this meeting, in particular the foreign ministers, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the other dignitaries who are with us today. Their participation in the meeting is highly appreciated.

I also wish to commend Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sablière, Permanent Representative of France, for ably steering the affairs of the Council in July, a month that witnessed complex developments on the world scene, demonstrating how elusive peace can be even when it seems assured.

Despite the clamour of events in other regions of the world, it is appropriate that, with Ghana in the chair, the Council should devote at least one meeting to an examination of the situation in West Africa, using the lessons of our experience and all the peacemaking tools at our disposal to meet existing as well as emerging challenges. The aim should be not only to preserve the modest achievements of the region in the area of peace after nearly two decades of conflict, but also to address the underlying causes with a view to finding a lasting solution to the chronic instability.

In practical terms, peace consolidation is an all-encompassing enterprise, involving initiatives ranging from conflict prevention, management and resolution to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It has to include a wide range of programmes and activities targeted at virtually every sector of national life. The actions must necessarily cover every stratum of society and, inevitably, span across national and regional boundaries to embrace the global community as a whole. When the world's leaders adopted the outcome document of the 2005 world summit last September, they reaffirmed that peace and stability thrive best on a foundation of sustainable development, itself inextricably linked with good governance. We need thus to root our peace strategies in realism by focusing less on quick fixes and more on underlying causes and durable solutions to the problem of instability.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, a body entrusted with the responsibility of healing the wounds of conflict and getting traumatized societies back on their feet, is very timely, being one of the most important outcomes of the current process of United Nations reform. Its role should enhance considerably the prospects for realizing comprehensive approaches to post-conflict recovery and, equally significantly, for ensuring the long-term engagement of the world community that is so critical to its success. Furthermore, in its interventions, the Commission should accord due recognition to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are vital signposts on the long and winding road to sustainable peace in regions such as ours that have suffered years of instability and conflict.

West Africa is at a crossroads, and we must get our bearings right. Though the guns are falling silent over much of the region, there remain simmering tensions in states such as Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. Somehow, these must be resolved before they become intractable. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the need to strengthen the foundations of peace even in those countries that have not experienced any major upheavals or conflicts, for we have to have consistently in view the fact that all the countries in the region are located in the bottom 25 per cent of the Human Development Index.

In May 1975, when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was founded, there was good reason to be optimistic about transforming the region into an economic powerhouse. It was envisaged that once the artificial barriers of language, lopsided infrastructural development, backward technologies, together with duplicative and inefficient productive structures, had been transcended, the region could exploit the advantages of free movement of people, goods and services across boundaries to build strong economies for the well-being of its peoples. It seems that, thirty-one years later, the region is a mere shadow of the vision that inspired the integration project.

Undoubtedly, we have paid dearly for the political instability that has plagued the region for much of the post-colonial era and the precipitous decline in the living standards of our peoples, contrary to the promise of the independence movements. The reasons for this state of affairs are complex. Nonetheless, it is now generally accepted that many of the region's problems could rightly be blamed on authoritarian rule, lack of good governance and unaccountable leadership, all of which have contributed immeasurably towards impoverishing and polarizing our societies. In fact, it was only a matter of time before the region would become engulfed in violent conflicts, starting with Liberia, in December 1989 and spreading rapidly to Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and, indeed, threatening to destabilize the entire region.

It is to the credit of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, that it stood steadfastly behind ECOWAS throughout the darkest moments of conflict in the region. Ironically, these conflicts have also demonstrated the effectiveness and resilience of ECOWAS, which has managed against great odds to contain them in a volatile region, often working in close partnership with the United Nations, pursuant to the objectives of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

We recognize that ECOWAS is faced with severe constraints in terms of capacity and resources, despite having been at the forefront of peace operations throughout West Africa. In fact, it already has in place the legal framework and several institutional mechanisms for pursuing peace in our region. We welcome the exceptionally active role that the United Nations is playing in building the capacity of ECOWAS to undertake peace missions. We further acknowledge with gratitude the support of several countries in that regard.

From our perspective, therefore, the strategy for peace consolidation should focus on the following broad priorities: first, resolving ongoing conflicts as quickly as possible or at least preventing them from escalating; secondly, preventing a relapse into conflict in countries that have just emerged from war; thirdly, preventing a fresh outbreak of conflict; fourthly, developing the institutional framework and relevant capacities for peace initiatives; fifthly, mobilizing the required resources at the national, regional and international levels for peace initiatives; and sixthly, addressing the underlying causes of conflict in a comprehensive manner.

These broad objectives should translate into programmes and plans of action, the details of which can obviously not be fashioned at this meeting. Nonetheless, it is of the utmost importance that we

redouble efforts to resolve in the shortest time possible some of the issues that pose a clear and present danger to security in West Africa.

In particular, we should aim at achieving the complete demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly child soldiers and mercenaries. There are also critical cross-border issues that should be urgently addressed, such as the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illegal dealings in mineral and natural resources, smuggling of narcotics, human trafficking, repatriation of refugees and resettlement of internally displaced persons.

Accelerated economic growth and sustainable development within the institutions of democratic governance must be the central goal of West Africa. After all the years of hard work and costly sacrifices, the global community must not settle for anything short of sustainable peace, stability and development. If the partnership envisaged under the Peacebuilding Commission should materialize, a stabilized West Africa, with its rich human and material resources, will succeed in building a modern and globally competitive economy capable of improving the living standards of its estimated 250 million inhabitants. By empowering ECOWAS, we make it a reliable partner for peace and wealth creation for the benefit not only of the region, but also of the entire world.

There is fortunately a silver lining to the dark clouds that have hovered over the region, and that is the evident determination of the West African peoples to construct new societies founded on the principles of democratic accountability, respect for human rights and the rule of law. That determination now dominates the political landscape of the region and represents the surest path to peace, progress and prosperity for West Africa. The example of Ghana's development under the iconic leadership of one of the region's new generation of democratic leaders, John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic, is a good illustration of this evolution. Long may it endure.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency, Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting and give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your delegation, for organizing this important session and by expressing my pleasure to see you in the Chair.

While we all remain deeply preoccupied by events in the Middle East, as you said earlier, I am heartened that we have gathered here today for this important discussion on peace consolidation in West Africa. Let me extend a warm welcome to the ministers who have joined us, as well as to the Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Let me also welcome my Special Representative for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. I'm sure I speak for all of us in expressing gratitude for his important and tireless contribution so far.

Political stability and prosperity continue to elude most West African countries. The region continues to be plagued by grave and widespread shortcomings with regard to governance. That prevents it from taking advantage of its rich natural resources and fulfilling its potential for social and economic development.

We know all too well the close connections between different conflicts in West Africa, and we have learned the hard way that we need a holistic approach to them. Insecurity has no respect for national boundaries. These conflicts often start in one country and in no time spread to its neighbours and become a regional problem.

Here, I think we need to congratulate the West African leaders for their willingness to become engaged in conflicts in the region, because there had been a tendency to say we do not interfere; it is an internal affair of this or that country. Unfortunately, these problems, as I have said, do not remain internal for long. They create refugees, they create instability in the region, they scare away investors. So what starts as a problem for one country invariably becomes a regional problem, and I am happy that the countries are engaging it.

I think it is extremely important that we focus on ending the conflicts in the region so as to be able to tackle the essential tasks of economic and social development. For peace to prevail, and to last, we are seeking to develop meaningful peacebuilding initiatives, including reconciliation and confidence-building processes, as well as mechanisms to strengthen the rule of law. This is essential to support fragile post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau.

Too many times, in international responses to post-conflict situations, we have suffered from the same weaknesses — shortage of funds, lack of international coordination and a tendency to leave too soon. That can reverse hard-won results and undermine attempts to build solid States and societies.

That is why Member States decided to create the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, which held its first meeting in June. And it was for all those reasons that the United Nations established an Office for West Africa, based in Dakar, to develop a regional strategy. That work involves continuing efforts to prevent conflict, as demonstrated in the Organization's support for Nigeria and Cameroon when they reached agreement in June on ways to implement a settlement of the four-decades-long dispute over Bakassi.

Through the presence of three United Nations peacekeeping missions and one peacebuilding support office in the subregion, the United Nations is demonstrating its commitment to efforts to end the cycle of violence that has destroyed so many lives and so much infrastructure. We are committed to continuing to work with members of the subregion on the journey to sustainable peace — and you can count on us.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

Mr. Ould-Abdallah (*spoke in French*): I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having taken the good initiative of organizing this meeting, which attests to the importance that the Security Council attaches to the questions of peace and security in West Africa.

I shall begin with two comments.

First, West Africa is a region in transition: political transition from the era of single parties to multiparty democracy, but also economic transition from State-run economies to the private sector. The transition is also demographic, and this is a new and important problem. The population is largely young. Of the 270 million inhabitants in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), almost sixty per cent are less than 30 years old. A great many of those young people are unemployed, so instead of being a source of hope they are a threat to stability, despite themselves. For two decades war has been their primary employer.

Secondly, informal migration — sometimes called clandestine migration — of young people is gradually becoming a major political challenge for the Governments of the subregion and for the international community.

These are new threats. Much progress has been made in West Africa. The Council should reinforce its support for those efforts, especially to consolidate progress and preventive action in the face of new threats.

In terms of threat — and I insist on this point, we do not read about it much in the press or in the reports — the northern and eastern borders of the West African subregion are porous and fragile, as are the borders between States. Those zones are areas of legitimate commerce, but they also shelter criminal activities such as trafficking in arms, drugs and natural resources.

In the southern area, along the Gulf of Guinea, as in the Sahel, there are religious groups — evangelists and Islamists. Social functions that formerly were performed by the State are now being carried out by these groups — health centres, schools and wells, for example. Alongside those two religious groups, the older, well-established Islamic brotherhoods and the Christian churches, especially the Catholics, are less and less visible.

Another emerging threat that I wish to mention is the development of piracy on the high seas.

Notwithstanding all these challenges to be monitored, the integration of West Africa is continuing to make progress. The subregion is more integrated politically and economically than it was in the past. The voice of ECOWAS is increasingly asserting itself in crisis management. Here we should give credit here to the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Ibn Chambas, who is with us today. Credit is also due to Nigeria, which increasingly is becoming the indispensable State of the subregion. Nigeria and Ghana provide eighty per cent of the ECOWAS budget.

The commitment of the United Nations is accepted in West Africa; the Organization is a factor largely accepted by the people. Missions in the subregion include my office, the United Nations Office for West Africa, and the missions in Sierra Leone,

Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire. Those missions are complementary. They meet regularly to exchange information and experience and to design a coherent, integrated approach. That approach, which is very effective at the level of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, enables the United Nations to share its human and logistic resources and to speak with a single voice in crisis management.

On several occasions the Security Council has recognized and encouraged this inter-mission collaboration, for instance in its presidential statements S/PRST/2004/7, of 25 March 2004, and S/PRST/2005/9, of 25 February 2005. That Security Council support is valuable to us in order to better carry out the mandates entrusted to us.

I believe there has been an evolution in Africa that should be seen beyond this, and that is the evolution at the people's level. To illustrate my point I have brought something to show how much West Africa and its people are connected, including with the Security Council. I have brought with me a little radio that costs less than a dollar and that makes it possible to follow the news on FM — and I am not doing public relations for the BBC or for Radio France Internationale or the Voice of America, but one can listen to news on these little radios. I think that each Council member should have one of these radios just to understand my point. They cost less than $1 each, and people can keep abreast of the news by using them.

Thus, the people are well-informed and interconnected. We need only think back to the Africa of 1960, when many people did not read and were not informed, to see how things have changed. Everything that the Council does is followed closely. People are increasingly connected, not only in capital cities, but in all parts of the world. Thanks to this connectivity, people are better informed and more demanding of their Governments and of the international community. Through radio and television, the discussions that take place here are closely followed and understood in the countryside and in the remotest villages.

In supporting conflict management and crisis resolution, the Security Council must pay particular attention to countries in transformation. These are stable States moving towards democratization, but they are still fragile. Their institutional capacities must be reinforced and vulnerable populations must be assisted, as appropriate.

Before concluding, I would like to stress that next year is an election year. Elections are an exercise in democracy, but they are also a time of tension. Elections are due to take place next year in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

In conclusion, the following priorities deserve attention: first, youth unemployment and its impact on national and regional peace and stability; secondly, unauthorized immigration and its increasing impact on local government and international relations; thirdly, peaceful democratic change of Government as a means of preventing conflict. How can we ensure the peaceful handover of power and avoid coups d'états, violence and civil wars? Fourthly, rapid urbanization and increasing insecurity are also a priority: 38 per cent to 40 per cent of West Africans live in capital cities. Finally, despite ECOWAS conventions on the matter, the free circulation of people and goods in West Africa has been difficult to maintain — in particular because of roadblocks and the constant harassment of the private sector. The private sector in Africa must be supported as a way of ensuring progress.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah for his briefing and for his thoughtful gifts.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

Mr. Chambas: It is certainly a pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over this body, and I deem it a great honour to have been invited to participate in today's important open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa. Your country, Ghana, is one of the poles of democracy, stability and growth within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and has been at the forefront in working to ensure peace, stability and democracy in West Africa. Our collective efforts have yielded positive dividends, as peace and normalcy gradually return to the West African region. We commend you for this brilliant initiative.

I would like to express appreciation to the United Nations, especially the Security Council and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for their solidarity and tremendous support in facilitating peace in war-torn and conflict-infected West African countries. The United Nations was our partner in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and it is currently our partner in Côte d'Ivoire. As the global body with a mandate for ensuring peace and security in the world,

the United Nations is playing its appropriate role in the peace process in West Africa.

Let me preface my statement with some general observations. Conflict in West Africa is a serious threat to global peace and security and requires global attention and priority. The youth crisis in West Africa, which is partly the fallout of prolonged conflict in some West African countries and the debilitating economic situation, is potentially explosive in West Africa and poses serious migration challenges for Western countries in Europe and North America.

It is cheaper and easier to invest in and consolidate peace than it is to contain and resolve conflicts. Peace consolidation is a proactive, rather than a reactive, response to threats to peace.

As I said earlier, the United Nations has been a major partner in the peace process in West Africa. The United Nations has also taken a bold initiative in creating the Peacebuilding Commission to support post-war countries in the process of peacebuilding and national recovery. As the Secretary-General rightly observed, the Peacebuilding Commission is designed to fill a gaping hole in the peace activities of the United Nations and is meant to assist countries in their transition from war to peace and stimulate stability, democracy and development. This is highly commendable. From July 2004 to June 2005, it is estimated that the United Nations spent about $4.5 billion on peacekeeping operations. That expenditure would not have been worthwhile without strong back-up in terms of post-conflict peace consolidation. That is because there is the possibility of a backlash if urgent steps are not taken by the international community, led by the United Nations, to scale-up peacebuilding initiatives and activities for the peoples and Governments of post-conflict countries.

Pro-peace forces must be reinforced, while institutions, infrastructure and facilities must be reconstructed. Peace is still very fragile in many post-conflict countries in West Africa, where the United Nations has assisted us in facilitating peace. Also, there are new threats to peace in some hitherto fairly stable countries such as Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. In Liberia, for example, while the country installed a new democratic Government, headed by Africa's first elected woman president, Her Excellency, Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, on 16 January 2006, the country needs tremendous support to put it on the path of irreversible peace.

Peace consolidation for West African countries will include the following four major components: the rebuilding of democratic institutions, including the judiciary, parliament and the civil service; security sector reform to establish competent, truly national security forces that are well equipped and can adequately protect lives and property; support for the economic capacity of the Government to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and deliver social services to the people; and private sector development to create jobs and economic opportunities for the large army of unemployed people, especially youth.

There are several ways through which the international community, especially the United Nations, can assist in the process of peace consolidation in post-war countries. These include budget support programmes. In most cases, post-conflict countries do not have the fiscal basis to raise the revenue needed for their budgetary obligations. They depend largely on foreign aid and support for their budgets. This constitutes a major means by which the international community can facilitate the stability of a new Government and put it on a sustainable path.

The second way is project facilitation, especially the reconstruction of infrastructure. In many post-conflict countries in West Africa, the social infrastructure — electricity, water, roads, et cetera has — either collapsed during the war or is barely functional. The reconstruction of those facilities is a major challenge to new Governments in many post-conflict countries, which is germane to peace consolidation. Liberia and Sierra Leone are good cases in point.

The third way is institutional capacity enhancement. Key institutions central to effective governance either have been weakened or are virtually non-functional in many post-war countries. Those institutions include the judiciary, civil service, parliament and security forces. They need both human capacity enhancement and the provision of required institutional facilities and resources. For instance, conducting elections is an arduous challenge for post-conflict countries; so is maintaining law and order. The international community can target those strategic governance sectors for capacity support.

The fourth way is policy formulation. Many post-conflict countries have a dearth of capacity in the area of policy formulation, especially with regard to the economy. The reason is that conflicts usually trigger the flight of human capital from conflict spots to other parts of the world, especially Europe and North America. To reinforce local capacity in the area of economic policy formulation, the international community, led by the United Nations, could help mobilize the diaspora human resources of each post-conflict country to assist it in the economic sphere. Liberia, for instance, has tremendous human resources in North America — resources that can be effectively harnessed in a systematic way for policy formulation and development priorities in that country.

There must be mutual accountability on the part of both the international community, which is assisting the post-conflict country, and the country itself. The country must conduct a regime of transparency, accountability and due process. While conditionalities should not be set for countries, it is important that the international resources mobilized for development be used judiciously as the country improves its capacity to generate its own resources internally.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is a welcome development. Africa, which has eight of the world's 17 United Nations peacekeeping operations in 2006, should qualify for the Commission's pilot scheme. West Africa, which has been an epicentre of conflict and war on the continent, should be a natural beneficiary of the work of the Commission.

However, the Peacebuilding Commission may not be in a position to take on many countries in its first few years of operation. Yet the challenge of peace consolidation and post-conflict reconstruction is urgent and requires that there be multiple options and strategies for assisting countries. Those options may include the following.

The first is continued support by various United Nations agencies for peace consolidation initiatives in West Africa. The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) can be a focal point for coordinated peace consolidation efforts by United Nations agencies. We in ECOWAS are already working very closely together with UNOWA; we are engaging in very close collaboration with Mr. Ould-Abdallah and his colleagues in Dakar.

The second option is support for ECOWAS in its peace consolidation initiatives in the subregion. ECOWAS is undertaking various peacebuilding and peace consolidation initiatives in the West African subregion, including accelerating the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and regional integration programmes, improving the capacity of electoral management bodies, facilitating the establishment and strengthening of the capacity of national human rights institutions to protect human rights and addressing the humanitarian challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. ECOWAS has established a Peace Fund to help countries with post-conflict reconstruction.

A proactive initiative composed of peace consolidation and post-conflict reconstruction is an urgent step to prevent conflict backlash in post-conflict countries. It is also an effective conflict prevention measure. It is easier and cheaper to invest in peace than to invest in conflict resolution. This United Nations initiative will yield greater peace dividends than the deployment of troops to contain conflicts and wars. ECOWAS fully supports this new approach by the United Nations and hopes that West Africa, which has been a hot spot of conflicts in the world, will be a major beneficiary of it.

The President: I thank Mr. Ibn Chambas for his generous comments on the development, positions and initiatives of Ghana.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

Sheikh Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to observe that in this Chamber today, there are two prominent sons of West Africa — specifically of Ghana — who bear the responsibility of high posts in the Organization: the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. Both of them have demonstrated courage, energy, vitality,

commitment and leadership in carrying out their weighty responsibilities.

The topic before us today centres on the vital region of West Africa and its quest for the consolidation of peace. It is noteworthy that West Africa and my own region share a common denomination and are very much alike: both are rich in human and natural resources, yet are consumed by bloody conflict. Both regions have been denied the peace and stability that are necessary for their peoples to benefit from their riches.

Peoples and Governments in West Africa have suffered greatly over the years in terms of death and destruction, economic hardship, flows of refugees and displaced persons, and much more. It is both heart-warming and reassuring that the vital region of West Africa is now witnessing a resurgence of hope and stability. West Africa is closer than ever to consolidating regional peace. That achievement is, to a large extent, the result of political will and commitment at the national level, the support of regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, and the successful efforts of the Secretary-General, a citizen of West Africa. Moreover, the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to be held in Senegal in 2009 will give us another opportunity to enhance the role of international organizations in that regard.

It is extremely critical that the international community support the Governments of Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in their difficult transition from a state of war to consolidating the conditions for peace. We note with gratitude that considerable progress has been made in both political and constitutional terms, and we applaud the peoples and the leadership of West Africa for that.

Yet diligence and success in the areas of politics and governance do not by themselves lead to the consolidation of peace, stability and human security. Peace consolidation is a prerequisite for sustainable peace. When the contemporary history of West Africa is written, it must record not only the millions who have died, but also the thousands who have been displaced and the hundreds of instances of destroyed infrastructure and property.

West Africans, in conjunction with the international community, must create new roads to stability and recovery; it is also essential that West African States strive for social and economic reconstruction. That is the essence of peace consolidation. The journey to peace in West Africa will be long and hazardous if the region is easily destabilized. Therefore, utmost attention must be paid the socio-economic dimensions of peace, in order to prevent a recurrence of violence and further destabilization.

Peace consolidation requires a creative approach by the international community. The following are key prerequisites for sustainable peace. New institutional frameworks must be created to galvanize national policy, in particular infrastructure and social institutions that inculcate a sense of belonging and responsibility towards family, community and country. Secondly, human resource development in West African countries must be reviewed, with a focus on the central role of the family in enhancing social integration, and addressing the critical issues of youth unemployment, the brain drain, the hosting of refugees by neighbouring States and refugee flows. Thirdly, a creative look at rebuilding the education systems must be undertaken within a national strategy of nation-building. Finally, there must be a mechanism to capitalize on peace initiatives and to support existing regional activities and enhance coordination between them and international peacebuilding mechanisms. A partnership between the Peacebuilding Commission and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding is also of utmost importance.

For all its current successes, West Africa needs considerable financial support from the international community at large, and particularly from the donor community. It is not enough to allocate funds in the areas of governance, the rule of law, the conduct of free and fair elections and the promotion of democracy and human rights. Peace consolidation requires the mobilization of resources in social sectors such as health, education and welfare. It is through those social sectors that, when adequate financial resources are allocated, we will be able to address the problems of child soldiers, the disabled, orphans and refugees. Addressing the needs of those social groups is a strategic priority for the Governments of West Africa. In this era of interdependence and globalization, the developed countries have a moral obligation to assist in such efforts.

This high-level open debate has once again shown that the Security Council must recognize education as a vital tool for enhancing and consolidating peace, security and stability. It is time for education to be part of a peace and security strategy, and for it to assist in the transition of societies from war to peace.

It is our hope and expectation that in years to come West Africa will see a rising sun of possibilities and a prosperous future for its peoples. The State of Qatar has extensive relations with the countries of West Africa and will strengthen its economic, political and cultural ties in order to contribute to the consolidation of peace in that region.

The President: I thank Sheikh Al-Thani for his generous comments addressed to the Secretary-General and to me.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your initiative to hold this open debate in the Security Council — of which your country, Ghana, holds the presidency for the month of August — on a subject that I believe is most timely: peace consolidation in West Africa. I thank you for inviting Côte d'Ivoire, through me, to participate. I congratulate the French delegation on its impressive work during its July presidency of the Council. I also welcome the presence of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other important figures, including Mr. Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, I convey my delegation's gratitude for everything he is doing for peace and stability in West Africa.

Today's debate is highly relevant for my country, which, as the Council is aware, has been striving — with the assistance of the international community and in particular of the United Nations and the Security Council — to emerge from a serious political and military crisis, whose destructive effects affect the entire West African subregion. It is also timely for a number of States of the subregion that have recently emerged from long crises that have had a multitude of effects. This initiative is therefore commendable and once again attests to the spirit of solidarity that Ghana and its President, His Excellency Mr. John Kufuor, have always shown in matters related to peace and development in Africa in general and in our subregion in particular.

As I said, the topic before the Council today is doubly important, first because it concerns peace consolidation in our subregion and, thus, our future. Indeed, given the many challenges posed at the beginning of the twenty-first century — such as globalization and technological change, which themselves raise serious concerns about the future of mankind — African peoples in general and those of West Africa in particular are experiencing feelings of fragility in the face of serious conflict or a climate of destabilization.

During these confusing times, people thus direct their gaze — full of concern but also full of hope — to the United Nations. Such expectations are fully justified because, at this very moment, West African countries that have recently been liberated from armed conflict are trying to consolidate the peace they have regained. Others, such as my country, are working hard to overcome the obstacles they are still encountering on the irreversible path to lasting peace and reconciliation.

The holding of this meeting of the Security Council, the United Nations organ that takes decisions and concrete action, gives me reason for hope. I venture to believe that the Council will better understand the realities of the region and will do everything possible to further assist West African countries in their quest for tranquillity — a sine qua non for the economic and social development of the subregion.

The topic we are discussing today is important also because it places us right at the core of the raison d'être of the United Nations. The peoples of the United Nations created this great institution, inter alia, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The purpose of the United Nations is to promote peace, development and human rights — all things that are conducive to peace consolidation and which are still far from being a reality in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular.

Our meeting attests to the will and determination of our Governments to work, for peace, good governance and development in our subregion, with the ongoing support of the international community and the United Nations. That is why my delegation hopes, as do other participants, that our debates will yield the clarification we need to read the signs of the times, to interpret the complex realities of West Africa. We also expect that the conclusions of these discussions will lead to specific action that is lasting and oriented towards peaceful coexistence among the populations of our subregion.

This discussion calls upon us all, as I see it, to have a comprehensive concept of peace. The peace that we are trying to consolidate cannot be lasting unless we tackle simultaneously a strategy to reduce tension and poverty and a strategy to promote democracy and good governance. Peace cannot be guaranteed unless disputes are settled peacefully and conflicts are prevented in a context of the observance of human rights. We should no longer be preparing war or waging war to obtain peace, but rather supporting peace in order to prevent war, in the broadest possible meaning of that word.

West Africa seems to have lost its legendary tranquillity. It has become the theatre of many conflicts. Within certain States, ethnic disputes, political differences and conflicts of interest have been misunderstood or mismanaged and have degenerated into confrontation and civil war. Likewise, conflicts separate or tear apart neighbouring, fraternal countries because of border disputes that, for the most part, have been due to non-compliance with the sacrosanct principle of the inviolability of the borders inherited from the colonial era, as stipulated in the Charter of the African Union.

Our subregion needs peace. Like the whole continent, it is facing multiple scourges and ills, and it can no longer afford futile, costly wars among its peoples, still less among the citizens of the same country. To make peace a reality, dialogue, interaction, tolerance, respect for the human person and respect for life and the persistent search for consensus-based ways to deal with apparently contradictory interests, must, once again, become fundamental values for the populations and the governance of this subregion.

Furthermore, it is important that, in our States, justice be conceived as an ideal of responsibility and fairness, needed to protect the ordinary citizen in the exercise of his or her activities and to prevent and punish violations of those rights. Justice, supported by the citizenry is justice that takes into consideration the rights of the accused, the interests of the victim and the well-being of society at large. Our States must work to put in place that kind of justice in our countries.

However, I do believe that, in a post-conflict context, justice that is rendered too early can undermine a still fragile peace and call into question the still timid confidence among former enemies. Justice that is too late, on the other hand, could prevent a society from turning the page and entering a new era through the revelation of the truth aimed at achieving reconciliation of hearts and minds.

To bring about peace consolidation, our subregion also expects international partners to give us lasting support that can strengthen capacities for intervention and provide mechanisms for resolving existing disputes. It also expects constructive support for our democratization processes and efforts to build the rule of law as guarantees of peace and stability. Just as international peace and security are the responsibility of the United Nations under the Charter, likewise prevention in our subregion should be one of the primary responsibilities of regional and subregional organizations.

In peace consolidation in West Africa, special attention should be given to the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons in our States. This is a source of concern for the subregion. According to statistics, 90 per cent of the victims of these weapons are civilians, and 80 per cent are women and children. Peace consolidation also means developing a culture of peace among our peoples.

Peace consolidation cannot be brought about simply by tackling political and military problems. It should also be conceived in actions benefiting economic development, because, as was recognized by the Security Council following a meeting of Heads of State and Government on 31 January 1992, international peace and security do not mean merely the absence of war and armed conflict. Other non-military threats to peace and security have their source in the instability of an economic nature.

Poverty remains a threat to peace and stability. This is particularly true in West Africa, where, because of recurrent conflicts that have ruined the economies of

the subregion, the majority of States are also confronting the overwhelming burden of debt and the constraints brought on by structural adjustment policies and the depletion of private and public investment and official development assistance.

One of the consequences of those constraints is unemployment, particularly among youth. They have no jobs, and so they easily become a reservoir providing child soldiers and militias in the event of a conflict. Those situations provide a fertile ground for frustration, dissidence and violence. All of these things are definitely a source of instability.

The underdevelopment of our States remains a major challenge that we must and can meet together. The stability of our subregion and the development of our countries depend on that.

Accordingly, I wish to reaffirm, by way of conclusion, that peace and prosperity must be sought together, with the same devotion and the same priority as political stability, and they must be supported by economic development and the rule of law, with special stress being laid on the observance of human rights.

Let us achieve our common goal together, which is to promote democracy and share democracy and development in order, in the long run, to consolidate peace in our subregion.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Bakayoko for his generous comments on the work of President Kufuor of Ghana.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea. On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Lamine Touré, Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Touré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should first of all like to express the regret of His Excellency Mr. Mamady Condé, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who, for reasons beyond his control, was unable to make this trip. He, therefore, entrusted me with extending his greetings and best wishes for every success.

Mr. President, I should also like to congratulate you for the excellent work done in the Security Council since your country has assumed the presidency. I can assure you of our full cooperation.

I am also pleased to express our full appreciation to the French delegation, for the way in which it conducted the work of the Council last month.

Your important initiative, Sir, of inviting us to New York to discuss and exchange views on the pertinent international matter of peace consolidation in West Africa, as well as on the efforts of our Governments to prevent and manage conflict, clearly demonstrates the Council's resolve to become more involved in the definitive settlement of conflicts in the subregion.

My delegation welcomes that initiative and notes that hotbeds of tension in West Africa over the past 15 years have been perpetuated, inter alia, by the lack of a relevant framework for peace consolidation based on such elements as the establishment of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; the restructuring of security forces; the effective implementation of national reconciliation programmes; national and international governance; the adoption and implementation of development plans; and a lasting settlement of cross-border problems.

That is why the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), conscious of its leading role, has become involved in the search for lasting solutions to the problems of peace, security and development, as clearly demonstrated by its technical meetings and the summit of subregional leaders.

While we welcome the successes achieved in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, we must note that the equilibrium in those States remains precarious and fragile. In Côte d'Ivoire, we have seen encouraging overall developments, but the peace process is entering a decisive phase with the upcoming elections and the settlement of related sensitive issues.

In that context, my delegation wishes once again to reaffirm the fact that, despite the willingness and determination of the subregion's leaders, our objectives will be achieved only when the international community, and the United Nations and donors in particular, heed our concerns and appeals for a lasting solution to the conflicts undermining our countries. It is also important to reinforce the active participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society, which play an important role in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and the consolidation of peace. Thus, the outstanding actions of, inter alia, the West African Network for Peacebuilding, the Mano River

Union Women's Network for Peace and traditional interlocutors deserve our congratulations and active support.

I cannot fail to mention the role played over the past 15 years by my country, the Republic of Guinea, in conflict prevention and in maintaining and consolidating peace in West Africa, especially in the Mano River basin, notwithstanding our own difficult national circumstances. The Republic of Guinea is not considered to be a country emerging from conflict, but it has suffered enormously from the various consequences of the troubles affecting four of the six countries with which we share borders, including a significant presence of refugees, environmental degradation, wear and tear on our social buildings, insecurity, the dissemination of diseases and so on.

It must also be noted that, from September 2000 through 2001, rebel attacks led not only to considerable loss of life and material damage, but also to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people throughout our national territory. All of this has had a negative impact on our national development programmes and has slowed growth. Moreover, for 16 years Guinea has not fully enjoyed the assistance it needs, despite numerous appeals and the enormous sacrifices it has made for regional peace and stability.

Nonetheless, my delegation welcomes the establishment within the United Nations of the Peacebuilding Commission and the transformation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into the Central Emergency Response Fund. We also welcome the United States' recent allocation of $32 million for underfinanced and forgotten crises, of which $1 is earmarked for my country. We also welcome the efforts of the African Development Bank to mobilize considerable resources for the ECOWAS Peace and Security Fund, recently launched in Guinea. While we extend our gratitude to our bilateral and multilateral partners, we appeal to the international community, through the Security Council, for greater assistance to my country, which, during the worst moments of crisis in the subregion, has made every effort to meet the challenges it has faced.

Conflict prevention and settlement, as well as peacebuilding, must be at the heart of our collective action. Without peace, stability and security, no development objective can be achieved. That is why the Government of Guinea, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa, intends to organize a subregional conference on strengthening good-neighbourliness and consolidating peace and security. This represents a comprehensive political approach that is necessary to allow us jointly to integrate the human dimension into our reflections on security. That meeting could spur participants to adopt mutual confidence-building measures to strengthen solidarity, peace and security within and among States members of the Union by signing a covenant of good-neighbourliness. In calling for the participation of ECOWAS, I know I can count on the material and financial support of the United Nations system to guarantee the success of the conference.

I also wish once again to express the readiness of the Republic of Guinea to continue to respect its African tradition of hospitality by providing humanitarian assistance to the distressed peoples of the subregion and by working tirelessly for the consolidation of peace.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that our work will lead to tangible results commensurate with the expectations of our peoples.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation welcomes Ghana's initiative to have the Security Council meet to consider the most urgent issues relating to the consolidation of peace in the West African subregion.

Recent developments in Africa have clearly shown that the most important means of preventing internal conflicts are strengthening the rule of law and developing democracy and good governance. All of that is crucial to the States of West Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau, where, as a result of bloody conflicts, more than 2 million people have died, according to the estimates of the Economic Commission for Africa.

The Security Council's consideration of ways to settle the current conflict situations in West Africa has found quite clearly that the greatest difficulties are encountered when addressing problems related to the transitional period. Truces and peace agreements exist, but are not fully implemented. New Governments are established, but are systematically overwhelmed. Legislative activity is slow. Timetables for political processes are not observed. Election deadlines are systematically violated. Disarmament and demobilization programmes are implemented with

difficulty or simply obstructed. Impunity leads to the resurgence of massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

The new Peacebuilding Commission has a role to play in resolving problems relating to peace consolidation in West Africa. It recently commenced its work, and it has begun to consider how to assist Sierra Leone and Burundi.

Intensified cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is important for resolving problems related to peace consolidation in West Africa. ECOWAS initiatives aimed at resolving key issues facing its member countries deserve all possible encouragement. Naturally, such initiatives will be doomed to failure without specific support from leading donor countries and international financial institutions. The dire economic situation of Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and, to a certain extent, Sierra Leone could be a factor nullifying the international community's achievements towards final settlement of the conflicts in those countries.

In our view, post-conflict recovery and development assistance should be an important element of any international strategy to ensure peace and prevent conflict in Africa. The operational funds and programmes of the United Nations can play an important role in monitoring and analysing the risks of conflict arising in Africa. At the post-conflict recovery stage in West African countries, it is important to focus on preventing a relapse into crisis once an effective link has been forged between emergency assistance and follow-on action to support long-term sustainable development and the integration into society of the most vulnerable population groups. All of this should be subordinate to the main goal of achieving political stability in post-conflict countries.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and as current Chair of the Group of Eight (G-8), the Russian Federation attaches exceptional importance to the settlement of conflict in Africa and to helping African countries emerge from instability and attain economic prosperity. The search for solutions to such problems accounted for a significant portion of the agenda of the G-8 summit held at Saint Petersburg in July.

My country approaches the issue of cooperation with Africa from the standpoint of an open, equal and mutually advantageous partnership. That is also the basis on which we are prepared to participate in international assistance to build Africa's peace consolidation capacity, on the understanding that international assistance in that area should supplement, not replace, measures taken by African States themselves.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to welcome you and to thank you for coming to New York to preside over today's meeting. We are grateful also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his presence at our meeting. I wish further to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their briefings.

In recent years, the Security Council has actively considered various conflict situations and cross-border issues in the West African region. The majority of the countries in the region, such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, have attained basic stability and embarked on the right track, that of post-conflict reconstruction. Côte d'Ivoire is actively engaged in preparing for the general election planned for October of this year, which will mark a critical juncture in its peace process. The improvement of the internal situations of those countries provides favourable conditions for resolving the intricate issues of West Africa and will have a positive impact on the overall stability and development of the region. We commend the United Nations system, ECOWAS, the African Union and other relevant international organizations for playing an important role in that regard.

In spite of the achievements I have described, the current stability in those conflict situations is still extremely fragile, and numerous examples show that they could relapse into turmoil. Serious problems remain, such as the proliferation of illicit small arms and the use of child soldiers and mercenaries. Programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into society, as well as security-sector reform, are facing funding shortages. Meanwhile, depressed economic prospects, high youth unemployment and the existence of large numbers of refugees continue to be serious social problems. In addition, the humanitarian situation in some areas provides no cause for optimism. The West African region still faces numerous challenges on the way to genuinely sustainable development. The top priority at

present is to continue consolidating the hard-won peace and to prevent the achievements already gained from being squandered, while at the same time steadily exploring effective ways for West African countries to achieve development. I would like to emphasize the following points in that regard.

First, we support the formulation of a comprehensive strategy for peace consolidation in West African countries, starting from the perspective of the region itself. Post-war reconstruction is a tremendous endeavour, and the countries concerned should develop systematic plans, including in the areas of national reconciliation, institution-building, security-sector reform, the resettlement of ex-combatants, economic recovery and youth employment, while making every effort to maintain internal stability. Post-war reconstruction should be carried out with both short-term and long-term objectives in view, so that the vast majority of the population can benefit from the peace dividend as peace is further consolidated through a process of development. While the international community can provide assistance and support, the key issue here remains the efforts of the Governments of the countries concerned, which should act with a sense of ownership in the process. Assistance from the international community should not replace their work. Efforts should also be made to avoid rigid application of external models. Countries concerned should also fully cooperate with one another to address cross-border and other issues of common concern.

Secondly, agencies of the United Nations system, including international financial institutions, as well as regional and subregional organizations, have much to do in consolidating peace in the West African region. They should assist the countries concerned with their reconstruction by doing what they do best, such as providing financial assistance or professional support. The unique roles played in recent years by organizations such as the African Union and ECOWAS show an admirable attempt at united self-reliance by African countries. China supports further efforts on their part and hopes that they can build their capacity in order to play a more significant role in promoting peace and development in the West African region. In considering various situations in West Africa, the Security Council should probe the root causes of turmoil and conflict and should avoid addressing those problems in an isolated and fragmented manner. Meanwhile, the Security Council should take into account the special concerns of our African brethren and should exercise caution when applying sanctions in order to avoid a negative impact on the peace process.

Thirdly, the Peacebuilding Commission, which has attracted mounting interest and expectations from all sides since its establishment, has opened a new forum for discussing and responding to the peaceful reconstruction of West Africa. As an event of historic significance to West Africa and to the entire African continent, the establishment of the Commission provides an important opportunity for the systematic formulation of policies for peace consolidation in West Africa. The question of Sierra Leone has already been put on the agenda of the Commission. We hope that the Commission will make a good start in its work and that it will accumulate successful experiences so as to play a bigger role in the future. Members of the Commission representing various sides can put forward practicable comprehensive proposals in the areas of security, the economy, the social sector and the rule of law, based on their own perspectives and in the light of the actual situation of the countries concerned and the needs of their peoples. All of this will help the Commission to gradually carry out its work in an orderly manner.

The issues of West Africa, like other issues facing the African continent, boil down to development. No peace can be genuinely guaranteed without development. Realizing durable peace in West Africa not only requires addressing regional hot-spot issues, but also making substantial efforts to help countries of the region to tackle the root causes of the problems and to resolve issues in the area of development.

Peace and development in this region bear favourably on peace and development on the whole of the African continent and that of the entire world. Therefore, the United Nations should, in active cooperation with the countries in this region, make greater efforts to promote sustainable development so as to actively implement the important outcomes on African development from last year's World Summit. Meanwhile, greater attention should be given to the African factor in various follow-up measures.

China supports strengthened coordination among the various United Nations missions in this region and hopes that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa will facilitate such coordination. China is ready to join the international

community in contributing to resolving the cross-border issues of West Africa and consolidating peace in that region.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina wishes to thank the delegation of Ghana for organizing this open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa. We welcome the presence of Minister Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in conducting our deliberations. We also acknowledge and welcome the participation, among others, of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. We also thank the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Ibn Chambas. We thank them for their statements and for their work for the United Nations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the issues that we are discussing today. Unfortunately, today they do not have the visibility nor the transparency that they deserve because the press is focusing on other events that unhappily are taking place in other geographic areas, as is the case today with the conflict in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, we wish to point out that the region of West Africa, which comprises 15 countries and has more than 260 million people living in a territory of five million square kilometres, has great political and economic relevance not only for the continent, but for the entire world. Some of these countries have managed to achieve a satisfactory transition from conflict to the establishment of constitutional and democratic regimes, as is the case of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. Others, like Côte d'Ivoire, have embarked on the path towards the establishment of a similar political regime. All of these situations, with their own characteristics, have required great efforts and sacrifices as well as the commitment of both regional actors and the international community as a whole in order to achieve peace, security and sustainable development.

While each situation is different, there are common elements. In the first place, we must not forget that they share a colonial past that has obviously had influence in the institutional weaknesses from which all these new States are suffering. Other elements common to these crises and to the challenges facing these countries are the limited possibilities for economic growth, the need to strengthen and affirm the State authorities, and a limited experience in the management of public affairs and also, unfortunately, corruption.

Also, in some cases there is the question of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; needed reforms in the security sectors; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; illicit cross-border activities; the worrisome humanitarian situation that still persists in large areas of the region; the crucial role of justice and the struggle against impunity for serious crimes committed in the past; and the need for education and respect for human rights.

For all these reasons, we consider it necessary to adopt a coordinated approach in the search for lasting solutions to the conflicts in the region, one promoting the capacity of national institutions to address their root causes in the framework of a peace consolidation process. In this regard, it is important to underline the valuable contribution of regional actors such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the advantages of cooperative work between the United Nations and regional organizations, as experience with ECOWAS has demonstrated.

It is worth mentioning the contribution that the Peacebuilding Commission can make in the future in helping to build sustainable peace, preventing nations from sliding back into conflict, and assessing the existence of the elements essential for stability, from immediate humanitarian assistance to security conditions and efforts by authorities to strengthen their national capacities — to mention but a few of the necessary elements.

It will be necessary for all the actors involved to do our utmost for the cause of peace and national reconciliation in West Africa. Only through coordinated efforts recognizing the primary role of each Government and each people in developing its own conditions that favour growth will we succeed in reversing the negative consequences of conflicts that the region has suffered in the past decade. Only in this way will we leave behind the fragility that persists in some countries of the region and bring forth the fruits of a lasting peace.

Once again Argentina thanks you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate in this endeavour.

Finally, we wish to thank the delegation of Ghana for the draft presidential statement that it has prepared, and we reaffirm our readiness to support it.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. Council President and Foreign Minister, for convening this meeting and focusing our attention on peace consolidation in West Africa, a situation which provides us with hope but at the same time keeps reminding us that the early stages of peace are fragile and need continued nurturing.

Before I continue, I should like to associate myself with the statement to be delivered by Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Conflicts in West Africa have taken a terrible toll in human lives, welfare and development, not only in the directly affected countries, but also in neighbouring States. The wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone have tragically demonstrated how conflict and State failure are contagious and how they leave a deadly trail by destabilizing their neighbours. Likewise, we know that the prosperity of one country is interdependent of the prospects of its neighbours.

I should like to focus on three areas which, in our view, call for particular attention: more efficient peacekeeping with a stronger focus on peacebuilding; ownership, leadership and partnership in peace processes; and the role of women in consolidating peace.

In West Africa we have seen increased cooperation in peacekeeping across borders, but there is still room for improvement. Better pooling of operational resources, including police capacity, and more flexible procedures for the transfer of troops are just two examples. Ways to enable peacekeepers to operate across borders should also be further explored. This could help in monitoring the flow of arms and of illegally exploited natural resources, as well as trafficking in humans, et cetera.

But more efficient peacekeeping is only a first step in post-conflict situations. A far more sustainable approach is to ensure that national security institutions are in place early on in the transition process. National police training and capacity-development programmes are already part of some integrated missions, but there is scope for integrating an even broader peacebuilding perspective into many of the mandates of peacekeeping operations. In doing so, we can provide a foundation and further facilitate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security-sector reform, and the rule of law and help to secure justice. Looking for best practices in this area could be an important task for the newly created Peacebuilding Commission.

Turning to the issues of ownership, leadership and partnership, let me underline that Africa, in particular West Africa, has provided us with useful experiences for the future. Regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have become key partners of the United Nations in the field of peace and security. Recent experiences have provided plenty of scope for working with African leaders seeking peaceful solutions to military crises. The AU's ownership of African and international efforts is evident, and the AU has played a commendable role in creating renewed momentum in, for instance, the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, the new International Working Group has been pivotal in ensuring necessary regional and international coordination and unity.

Through its Programme for Peace in Africa, Denmark has set aside more than $40 million over a five-year period to support Africa's own efforts to secure peace and stability on the continent. Through this programme, we are supporting the African Union, as well as subregional organizations, including ECOWAS, in strengthening their capacity in crisis preparedness and prevention, as well as in crisis management and response. In addition, we support strengthened collaboration with civil society, where many untapped resources, from early warning to conflict resolution, are available.

Finally, I should like to advocate a greater focus on women in conflict resolution and peace consolidation. There is a long history of women's participation in grass-roots efforts to minimize hostility and begin reconstruction and reconciliation. Yet women tend to take little part in formal peace processes and negotiations. War is hardest on women and children. They are the most vulnerable when wars tear apart entire societies, the social and economic infrastructure collapses and basic security is no longer present. In such situations of conflict, women take on multiple roles. They become the heads of families, and they hold communities together. In building sustainable peace, it must be recognized — across the board — that post-conflict initiatives are more successful when

women are given the opportunity to take their experiences further and to be an integral and equal part of peacemaking.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): Allow me first to welcome you, Mr. President, to New York and to the Security Council, and to thank you for coming here personally to discuss this issue. We thank you for having taken the initiative to hold today's thematic debate, because it is truly very important to examine the situation in West Africa from a regional perspective. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their briefings.

Greece fully associates itself with the statement to be made later by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Post-conflict civilian and military efforts, by both external and internal actors, are fundamental for peace consolidation. Their aim should be to prevent the recurrence of conflict and to establish the conditions for durable peace and sustainable development. Such efforts face significant political, policy, institutional and financial challenges, particularly in Africa — challenges that are distinct and specific to each region of the continent.

In West Africa, we are faced with a very real lack of coherent peace consolidation policies and strategies, which is a key obstacle to success. Peace consolidation efforts are considerably hampered by institutional fragmentation, as well as by insufficient resources. Lack of coherence and coordination in multilateral efforts often leads to individual actors pursuing personal interests, thereby undermining the possibility of overall success.

In West Africa — if our figures are correct — 60 per cent of the population is younger than 30 years of age. It is a well established fact that such young people are frequently marginalized and unemployed and can be easily recruited for wars. In fact, we can say that for the past 10 years, in many parts of West Africa, and particularly in Liberia, the biggest job provider has been civil war. Solving this problem is a long-term challenge which will continue to hamper peace consolidation efforts.

We hope that many of those challenges will be efficiently dealt with by the Peacebuilding Commission, whose overall goal is to reduce the chances of a country relapsing into violence after a peace agreement. With the selection of Sierra Leone among its first two cases, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission indicated the importance of West Africa in this endeavour.

Nevertheless, we consider that our approach to these issues of peace consolidation will be more effective if it is formulated within a regional framework. Under such circumstances, peace consolidation in one country is unlikely to succeed if neighbouring countries remain at war or if peace efforts are not harmonized.

To date, peace consolidation approaches, instruments and funding arrangements have rarely been tailored to address the regional nature of conflicts in West Africa, and separate peace efforts have not been coordinated or sequenced. The Security Council has started to recognize this regional component and the interaction of the various efforts undertaken in each separate country. It is very important to coordinate the activities of the various United Nations missions and offices in the countries of the region so that, through common efforts, we will manage to achieve the best possible results. We hope that very soon the Peacebuilding Commission will also move in that direction and will include all the countries of the area that are emerging from conflict in a regional strategic effort of peace consolidation.

The emphasis of peacekeeping is on the short term. It seeks to stabilize an immediate post-conflict situation, provide security and monitor ceasefires and peace agreements. Development policies, in contrast, have a more comprehensive and long-term perspective. Peace consolidation falls in between peacekeeping and development, as it addresses the challenges of the medium term, namely, to consolidate the existing peace and build the foundations for development in the future.

There is a short-term aspect, however, in peace consolidation, particularly in Africa. It requires immediate and extensive financial resources and investment. In West Africa, insufficient funding remains a significant obstacle to peace and development efforts. External assistance is only a temporary, short-term tool that should gradually fade

away, replaced by the building of solid foundations for sustainable economic development in each and every country. In West Africa, important activities in this sector should include: the transparent and accountable management of natural resources; combating youth unemployment; jump-starting the economy; wealth-sharing and the equitable distribution of resources; long-term economic growth and investment; the provision of health, social and educational services; and reform of the banking and financial sectors. The Peacebuilding Commission has to work closely with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, national authorities and the Economic Community of West African States in order to achieve those goals.

In conclusion, the challenges of consolidating peace in Africa are immense, yet the benefits are truly overwhelming. Overall, success will depend on the provision of sufficient resources and the longevity and strength of political commitment. It will also depend on the application of the most appropriate elements of peace consolidation. Finally, success will depend on the designing of a more effective strategy in the application of appropriate elements of regional peace consolidation.

Mr. Ruiz Rosas (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru welcomes your presence, Mr. Minister. We congratulate you on the way in which the delegation of Ghana has been presiding over the work of the Security Council and on this initiative to address peace consolidation in West Africa within the Council. We also appreciate the presence this morning of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and the Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs of Guinea, as well as the statements made by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

This is an opportunity to comprehensively consider this problem in a region where political, social, economic or security changes in one State can immediately affect its neighbours. My delegation wishes to limit its statement to highlighting five aspects related to the achievement and consolidation of peace in this part of the African continent.

First, we believe that we must not confuse calm with peace. Calm is superficial and consists only of the fleeting absence of armed violence. Peace transcends it and implies harmonious basic social interaction. Recent history has shown us that this erroneous perception has meant that peacekeeping forces are withdrawn prematurely, that conflicts seemingly overcome have reappeared and that the peoples involved lack confidence in the effectiveness of peace processes.

Secondly, such harmonious social interaction can be sustained only through a constant focus on overcoming the root causes of conflict — that is, through greater attention to the people's most basic needs and to the long-term sustainability of their economies. These economies are based mainly on the production of goods with limited added value. Moreover, tax revenues often do not meet the needs of the administrative apparatus, limiting a State's control over its territory, and population growth often exceeds economic growth. Disputes over natural resources, which are also a factor in conflict, intensify when they occur in a context of social or cultural heterogeneity.

While this situation of poverty continues, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire said, there will be no lasting peace consolidation process. The international community undoubtedly has an obligation to provide the utmost assistance and support.

In that connection, the problems of peace consolidation in this region can be divided into three areas: security; public institutions and the rule of law, two areas that have been the primary focus of the Security Council's attention through peacekeeping operations; and the socio-economic sphere, which in most cases has received scant attention. In practice, that has delayed the economic recovery of these countries as a means to satisfy basic social needs and contribute to political stability. The recently established Peacebuilding Commission faces that challenge.

Therefore, in order to achieve a balance in these areas, it is essential that concrete measures be taken to strengthen initial steps aimed at economic stabilization and the promotion of development in West Africa, such as, inter alia, broadening tariff exemptions and favourable treatment in other markets; the total write-off or reconversion of foreign debt; promoting and assisting foreign investment; commitment on the part of the international financial institutions to improve basic public services and infrastructure; and access to science and technology.

Thirdly, with regard to the illicit exploitation of natural resources as a source of financing for armed groups — a recurring phenomenon in the region — the implementation of certification mechanisms for the production and commercial chain for raw materials, including rubber, timber and cocoa, could redirect the benefits from those activities towards the people and contribute to tax revenues. The Kimberley Process is undoubtedly a model for the implementation of such mechanisms.

All of that must accompanied by the adoption of measures to strengthen public institutions, the judicial system, democracy and electoral mechanisms and to promote respect for human rights and security sector reform. Included in this area is the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that connection, we must strengthen mechanisms for political dialogue — including those of ancestral traditions — and implement educational curricula promoting peace and development.

Finally, Peru is convinced that the leadership and commitment of these countries' authorities and of their civil societies is essential throughout the peace process. To that end, the involvement of regional forums — such as, in this case, ECOWAS, focusing on socio-economic development, and the African Union, emphasizing peace and security — must continue to be very active. These forums have consistently helped to alleviate crises in the region and must continue to be promoters of peace consolidation in West Africa.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for having brought us together today to remain mobilized on this important subject.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

I should, however, like to add one or two comments. The first is a personal comment, Mr. Minister, to tell you how pleased I am to see you here today and to see a number of other friendly faces around this table. Three years ago, you welcomed me and the other members of the Security Council in your capital. Three years ago, Charles Taylor was still in power and we were anxiously asking ourselves how to make him leave. Sierra Leone was still in a state of shock; its society was really in chaos. Côte d'Ivoire was at the brink of war. So it was a time of great anxiety for the whole region. We were all aware that in that region each country, each situation, each crisis was a piece of a puzzle, and if one or two pieces of that puzzle were sick then that sickness would spread to the entire puzzle.

Three years later, things undoubtedly are better. Taylor is where he should have been for a long time, and in Liberia legitimate transitional authorities have taken over. In Sierra Leone we see some renewal. It is very promising that the Peacebuilding Commission has chosen that country as one of the first on which it will focus its efforts. Finally, in Côte d'Ivoire progress is too slow. There are too many vicissitudes; things are accepted today and then rejected tomorrow.

But that being said, overall in the past three years we have managed to contain the risks of the crisis growing worse, and the process is on the right track. As a French delegate, I strongly hope that in the coming weeks and months our Ivorian friends will all demonstrate a sufficient sense of responsibility so that the elections can take place properly. If that does happen, I think that in a way the region will have come to the end of a cycle of disturbance, disorder and violence, a cycle that will have been overcome little by little. So perhaps today's meeting is an opportunity for us to engage in considering what might happen next, what kind of cycle comes next. To get that discussion going, I will set out a few points.

First, we need to preserve the achievements of ECOWAS, because the successes we have been seeing in these three years are to a large extent due to the actions of some heads of State or of certain countries, and also to ECOWAS, which has shown that it has a considerable capacity to adapt to situations in a strong partnership with the United Nations, in particular with the Security Council. This has to be preserved and developed, because with regard to certain transregional and transborder problems, we have not completed all the work to be done in this house. There is still a lot to be done, especially if we wish to prevent the problem of refugees, to take one example, from destabilizing certain countries such as Guinea, whose representative we heard a moment ago. Thus the first pillar is to preserve what has been achieved by ECOWAS and by its partnership with international institutions.

The second pillar is to develop governance. As you said yourself, Mr. President, at the root of the disturbances that the region has experienced was a serious problem of governance.

The third pillar is to invest in young people and in globalization. I believe Mr. Ould-Abdallah was quite right to refer to the extraordinary potential, both in terms of promise and of danger, of the enormous number of young people in that region. That was the theme of the Bamako meeting, the Africa-France meeting that took place in December. As Mr. Ould-Abdallah rightly said, these young people are very attuned to globalization. Each situation in the region is an element of a regional puzzle, as the region is part of the global puzzle. To date the region has seen only the negative aspects of globalization. Now, in the new cycle, it must have access to the positive aspects, for the benefit of the young people and through them.

Will the new cycle require another form of partnership between the region and the international institutions? I do not have any answer; perhaps it is a bit too early for that. But it is a point that would be interesting to consider in the coming months. Before we get to that point, having opened up the prospects on what our common work could be, I want to come back to a note of realism. Before we can really start this new cycle of hope and of promise, we need to properly complete the cycle that we hope is coming to an end today. For that, one of the transition points, one of the necessary steps is, I think, the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. Again, I do hope that that can be completed in conditions that the international community supports. Just two days ago this was referred to in the statement by the presidency of the Security Council.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, let me say first how pleased I am to see you presiding at this meeting. We wish to congratulate you and the entire delegation of Ghana on the very positive initiative of convening this public debate on peace consolidation in West Africa. I welcome the eminent individuals have come from West Africa and elsewhere, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

This timely occasion enables the Council to review efforts to consolidate peace and security in that region, which has witnessed some of the bloodiest human tragedies in our continent. In so doing, the Council is pursuing its past positive initiatives to meet the serious crises troubling the region and to respond to the aspirations of people for peace, security and well-being.

For years, West Africa was the symbol of peace and stability and a model of economic integration — before it sank into horrific civil wars that devastated countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and, today, Côte d'Ivoire, which used to be considered the economic lung and the beacon for a region full of promise.

To speak of peace consolidation today in countries such as Liberia or Sierra Leone is not only a source of satisfaction but also a reason to hope for other countries still embroiled in conflict. We welcome the results achieved in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau to heal the wounds of the past, to lay the groundwork for democracy and to set the pace for lasting peace, despite the stumbling blocks that remain.

A return to constitutional rule in these countries following credible democratic elections is not the least of these achievements, which must be welcomed. Everyone still recalls the symbolic value of Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf's election as President of Liberia. Such events have made it possible to foresee political stability and economic recovery.

However, we remain concerned by the persistence in some of these countries of destabilizing factors, such as the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, the phenomenon of child soldiers, poverty, youth unemployment, corruption, gaps in the judicial system and a lack of resources.

In Côte d'Ivoire, we cannot yet speak of peace consolidation, but we are seeking a solution to enable that country to emerge from the crisis. The Security Council has just adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/37) reflecting the main concerns of the international community in the face of this very uncertain situation.

Since we are seeking viable strategies, I wish to recall that, when considering problems relating to peace consolidation, we must understandably turn to the still very valid report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318). Following its consideration of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, the General Assembly last year adopted resolution 60/223, and I wish to recall some of the main ideas here. First, Member States and United Nations bodies must consider implementing those recommendations on a priority basis. In addition,

coordinated, sustained and integrated efforts must be pursued by United Nations bodies, Member States, regional and subregional organizations and international and regional financial institutions to prevent conflicts and consolidate peace.

Moreover, I note the determination of the African Union (AU) to strengthen its peacekeeping capacity and to carry out peacekeeping activities in the continent, in close cooperation with the United Nations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. Here I would note with satisfaction the creation of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the efforts aimed at setting up a continental early warning system and an enhanced mediation capacity.

We also need to support the new Peacebuilding Commission, and we are pleased that Sierra Leone, a country of the subregion, has been chosen for the initial phase of its work.

There is also a need for the African Union Commission, the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the United Nations Secretariat to coordinate their action to implement a programme headed by Africans, involving a strategic framework for post-conflict reconstruction, which the AU can define with a view to peace consolidation and post-conflict peacebuilding. Assistance must be provided to African countries emerging from conflict to restore security, ensure the return of displaced persons and refugees, promote human rights and increase productive, income-producing activities, in particular for young people and former combatants. All of these concerns have been taken into account in the draft presidential statement before us today. That is why my delegation strongly supports the draft statement: it contains all the elements for a realistic and dynamic approach to the problem.

The peace consolidation process requires a cooperative approach that must lead to strengthened cooperation among all actors involved. Foremost among them are the States concerned, which must work together on problems such as child soldiers, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, and so forth. As for the various United Nations missions and agencies in the subregion, they must work in a concerted and integrated fashion. Here, let me stress that the United Nations Office for West Africa has a major role to play in implementing such an approach, and I thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah for the outstanding statement he made here this morning.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the excellent cooperation existing among the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the States of the subregion in achieving the objectives of peace, security and development in West Africa. This is one of the major concerns of the African Union, and the current Chairman of the Union, President Denis Sassou Nguesso, knows that recovery for West Africa is a crucial element of the overall development of our continent, and of its future.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered shortly by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, Sir, I will limit my statement to the following comments and, as you suggested, will circulate the longer text in writing.

Let me first take this opportunity, Mr. President, to congratulate you and the delegation of Ghana on having organized this important debate. We believe that it will be an important contribution to addressing issues of peace and security in West Africa. We welcome the presence at our meeting of ministers from countries of West Africa and the participation in the discussion of Mr. Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In that regard, we would like to emphasize the important role played by ECOWAS in strengthening cooperation, good-neighbourly relations and confidence-building among the countries of West Africa. Regional cooperation and integration represent, in our opinion, the best way to ensure peace consolidation and conflict prevention. This approach is a guarantee of sustainability and long-lasting solutions. ECOWAS is an embodiment of cooperative efforts and local and subregional ownership in addressing common challenges and problems. In that respect, we support the strengthening of its mechanisms and capacities for pursuing peace in the region and deepening interaction and cooperation with the United Nations to that end.

In spite of substantive progress in peace consolidation in West Africa in recent years, many

problems and challenges in the region remain to be tackled.

First, we need to address the cross-border implications of conflicts, including the destructive impact of cross-border trafficking of arms, movement of rebel groups, and so forth. They have been a major threat to regional peace; as we have witnessed in the past, a conflict in one country can ignite the whole subregion. That is why we believe that those threats can be addressed efficiently only through regional cooperative efforts.

Currently, our main concern is related to the volatile situation in Côte d'Ivoire. In that context, we call upon the main stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire to expedite their efforts to implement the road map and their own commitments undertaken a month ago in Yamoussoukro. The efforts of Prime Minister Banny should receive the full support of all neighbours and countries of the region, with the aim of further strengthening stability in West Africa.

Secondly, the people of the region live in widespread poverty and their nations are among the poorest in the world. One of the reasons for that situation has been the illegal exploitation of natural resources. That has not only helped to finance wars, but also deprived the population of the West African nations of their sources of potential wealth and prosperity. If we speak about peace consolidation in West Africa, we should also speak about the economic consolidation of the region.

Thirdly, both peace and economic consolidation are interlinked with the strengthening of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights. We are glad to see that the majority of the Governments in the region have emerged from democratic elections. In particular, we would like to commend the peoples of Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia for choosing that path after years of bitter conflicts.

We believe that the Peacebuilding Commission will play an important role in supporting peace consolidation processes in West Africa. We are therefore pleased to see that Sierra Leone has become one of the first countries on its agenda.

We believe that it is crucial that the international community provide adequate support to peace consolidation processes in West Africa by providing both expert guidance and development aid. Donor support is crucial and important. It cannot, however, substitute for the reforms necessary to ensure the sustainable development of a country. To achieve that, one needs security and a stable economic and legal environment. Institution-building emerges as crucially important in that regard. National ownership of those processes is instrumental to and a prerequisite for success.

Democratic elections, fighting corruption, introducing sound economic policies and reforms, strengthening the rule of law and reform of the judicial sector all help to increase stability, attract foreign investment and foster the growth of local industries and entrepreneurship.

From the national security viewpoint, security sector reform is pre-eminent. There is widespread understanding within the international community that an ill-governed and unreformed security sector represents a decisive obstacle to the promotion of sustainable development, democracy and peace and is one of the main reasons why countries, after a short period of relative stability, relapse into conflict.

Last month in Bratislava, we organized an expert workshop on security sector reform and we are currently preparing a series of round tables on that topic, to be held in New York this autumn, to stimulate discussion among Member countries on that important topic and to define the best way to address the problems in that area through a coherent and systematic approach within the United Nations system.

In addition, we would also like to organize a seminar on that important issue in Africa, where the question of security sector reform is most urgent. Its aim would be to sensitize the wider population to the importance of the issue and to draw on the practical experience of those who have recent such experience with both the successes and failures of security sector reform. We hope that our initiative will be welcomed as one of the practical contributions of Slovakia to peace consolidation in West Africa.

Finally, we thank Ghana for preparing the draft presidential statement on peace consolidation in West Africa and we support its adoption.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): My delegation warmly welcomes you, Sir, and the other ministers here to New York and to the United States. I join others in commending you on this useful initiative

of exchanging ideas in the Council on the topic of peace consolidation in West Africa.

I also wish to add my thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ould-Abdallah and Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas for sharing their thoughts on this complicated issue.

West Africa has come a long way from the social chaos and civil war experienced throughout much of the subregion not very long ago, as others here have pointed out. The positive developments in West Africa during the past few years have been remarkable. It is, for many, many West Africans, a better and safer place.

The United States applauds the contributions made by the United Nations in West African countries, including Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia. United Nations efforts in those countries — both its carrots and its sticks — have been essential to the resolution of conflict and subsequent developments that have taken place. We also commend the United Nations continuing efforts to support the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire and urge the Ivorian parties to take all necessary steps to move that process forward.

Many in the international community have contributed money, troops and other means to international efforts supporting the transition to stability and democratic rule in the region. For our part, the United States will continue to support that critical work.

We have taken note of and agree with many of the points that have been made about how to sustain the peace. We would underscore as well that now is not the time for complacency. While there have been some substantial improvements in West Africa, there is important work to be done. International support is still essential for those nations in a variety of areas, including security sector reform, governance, development and financial stability, and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

We believe that lasting stability and development in West Africa are most likely to be achieved through the link of democracy and economic freedom. International aid, of course, is a part of the mix, as is private investment, but aid works best and investment will almost certainly follow once freely elected Governments put in place policies of good governance, transparency and rule of law. It is for that reason that we were encouraged by the commitment shown by Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf to the Governance Economic Management Action Plan. We hope that regional organizations, and especially the Economic Community of West African States, will find more ways to promote those values.

As further incentive to good governance, President Bush proposed in 2002 the Millennium Challenge Account to serve as a concrete mechanism for linking development assistance to developing countries that rule justly, invest wisely in their people, and encourage economic freedom. The growing number of countries in Africa, including West Africa, that are demonstrating their resolve to meet those conditions is heartening. Ghana is a prime example. Just last week, in a signing ceremony in Washington, D.C., witnessed by President John Kufuor and Secretary of State Rice, the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed its largest grant to date — more than half a billion dollars — for anti-poverty programmes in Ghana.

We also believe that a commitment to human rights will help to consolidate peace. Continued efforts throughout the region to develop more democratic and professional security forces are needed. Individuals must be held accountable for their crimes. The commendable efforts of West African leaders to bring Charles Taylor to justice were an important step in that direction.

The United States will remain actively engaged in the spectrum of efforts to consolidate peace in West Africa. We are pleased with the decision of the Peacebuilding Commission to include Sierra Leone in its initial efforts, and we look forward to its recommendations.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): My delegation would like to thank the Ghana delegation for organizing this debate on an important issue — peace consolidation in West Africa — and appreciates the fact that you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, are presiding over the deliberations. We also welcome the participation of ministers from the region in this debate, and I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, for a useful briefing.

A decade ago, several countries in West Africa were racked by wars and civil disturbances, and much of the subregion remained, unfortunately, a centre of

06-46071

extreme instability, violence and much suffering. Today, however, remarkably, we are witnessing in the subregion a transition from conflict to constitutional rule and steady progress towards peace consolidation. In view of those latest welcome developments in West Africa, the timing of this meeting is certainly appropriate.

The conflicts in West Africa have occurred in a geographically compact area and have shared in common many of the same root causes. This has meant inevitably that conflict in one country could easily spill over into another and make solution of the problems more complicated. At the same time, in these circumstances, national and international efforts for finding peace and keeping the peace in a subregional framework of cooperation have become especially important. We therefore highly commend the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the many invaluable initiatives it has taken and for the key role it undoubtedly will continue to play in the consolidation of peace in the subregion. Here, I thank the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Chambas, for his briefing and his useful observations. We note in particular the role of ECOWAS in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and reconstruction, as well as with regard to measures to tackle the problem of small arms. The Japanese Government will continue its support for such regional efforts through measures including direct assistance to the ECOWAS secretariat.

Since the conflicts in West Africa interact with each other, it is important to define common challenges and to coordinate the efforts to achieve peace consolidation in the subregion as a whole. At the Conference on Consolidation of Peace, held in Addis Ababa in February of this year within the framework of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which my Government co-sponsored, focus was placed on three issues — security; political governance and transition; and community reconstruction and socio-economic development — since those three clusters of issues are considered essential to implementing a comprehensive, integrated and consistent approach to peace consolidation anywhere, including in West Africa.

In a post-conflict society, the first and most important task should be to establish a stable and secure social environment. To that end, the planning and successful implementation of security-sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and judicial reform, are critically important. Secondly, in the fields of political governance and transition, all parties to a conflict should be made aware of the importance of the democratic process and should respect and participate constructively in the agreed political process. Finally, to achieve community reconstruction and socio-economic development, it is essential to meet basic human needs such as safe water and sanitation, as well as to ensure infrastructure- and capacity-building. It is also important to address issues which if unaddressed could lead to the destabilization of society, including, especially, the problems of ex-combatants and youth unemployment. Development of the private sector is an indispensable ingredient to solving these core problems.

The conditions surrounding peace consolidation in West Africa and the requirements for attaining it differ from country to country, making for differences in the prioritization of tasks. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, resolving the political confrontation that has led to armed conflict is the most urgent issue, whereas in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau security-sector reform and socio-economic stabilization take first priority.

Sierra Leone is regarded as the most successful example of peace consolidation in West Africa. We must bear in mind, however, that a seemingly successful outcome of United Nations peacekeeping operations may contain pitfalls and that the situation can relapse into chaos, as we have witnessed in the past, including most recently in Timor-Leste. The problems in Timor-Leste clearly show how important it is to address comprehensively the three clusters of core issues which I mentioned earlier, and that, in dealing with peace consolidation in West Africa, one should be fully mindful of the lessons learned from past examples.

In supporting the efforts of Governments in the subregion to address these issues, the international community must extend seamless and generous assistance and appropriate support. To that end, the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission should address the issues in accordance with their specific areas of responsibility. From the Security Council's point of view, the newly established Peacebuilding Commission can offer constructive input

to the Council, particularly with respect to the following two points.

First of all, the Commission should clarify the order of priority of the matters it takes under consideration, within the comprehensive and integrated approach on which Member States have agreed. Secondly, it is necessary for the Commission to study carefully and in detail the peacebuilding strategies of each State under consideration, by listening to, and incorporating into its recommendations, the views of the States concerned, United Nations field missions, experts, non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors, while expecting that each country under consideration will demonstrate full ownership of the process in addressing the issues that are identified. In that respect, we hope that all participants in the forthcoming country-specific meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission, on Sierra Leone and on Burundi, will contribute to a constructive discussion by offering their frank views on the issues at hand.

Japan regards the consolidation of peace as one of the main pillars of its foreign development assistance policy. The TICAD process, initiated in 1993, has made a significant contribution by fostering partnership between African States and the international community. In the TICAD process, we have designated the consolidation of peace as one of three main pillars of assistance to Africa from 2003 on, along with human-centred development and poverty reduction through economic development. During the Gleneagles summit of the Group of Eight countries last year, Prime Minister Koizumi announced the expansion of Japan's assistance for peace consolidation, and at the TICAD Conference on Consolidation of Peace, which I mentioned earlier, the Japanese Government launched a new initiative which included the immediate disbursement of $60 million in assistance by the end of March this year, focusing on West Africa, the Sudan and the Great Lakes region in particular.

In conclusion, Japan intends to continue its active efforts to support peace consolidation in West Africa, and in Africa as a whole, and to play a substantive role in the activities of both the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. In doing so, we sincerely hope that in the near future, West Africa will no longer be seen as a cradle of war and instability but as a beacon of peacebuilding and the consolidation of peace.

Japan thanks the delegation of Ghana for preparing a draft presidential statement, which my delegation supports.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I warmly welcome the initiative of Ghana to hold this debate. It is a particular pleasure, Sir, to welcome you back to the Council and to see you presiding over our work this morning. I should also like to thank our visitors who have already contributed to the debate and to associate the United Kingdom with the statement to be made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

The United Kingdom has always had a particularly close interest in West Africa, an area which is central to the work of the Security Council. So, I should like to thank His Excellency President John Agyekum Kufuor and the Government of Ghana for their particularly strong and continued commitment to promoting regional peace and stability in West Africa, particularly in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. If I may say so, Mr. President, your country's record of stability and good governance sets an example to the subregion and more widely, and the United Kingdom stands fully behind Ghana in its efforts.

We very much appreciate the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to bring peace to the region, and we are committed to working with the African Union and ECOWAS to deliver regional solutions to West African problems. Without that regional approach, there can be no lasting peace and stability. As we have seen only too clearly, adverse events in one State can quickly spill over into neighbouring States.

But compared to the dark days of a few years ago, it is good now to see that peace is embedding itself within West Africa. Of course there are setbacks, as recent events in Côte d'Ivoire have shown, but the region now has a real opportunity to consolidate its fragile but increasingly stable peace. Through this Council, we need to work with the Peacebuilding Commission and, through the efforts of the entire United Nations family, make sure that the United Nations as a whole reinforces its support to West Africa so that it can build upon the gains that are being made.

There is, of course, still a long way to go, but the United Kingdom is committed to the region, through its military and long-term development support. Both

Sierra Leone and Liberia stand on the threshold of becoming regional and African success stories. Both have the opportunity to draw away from conflict once and for all, using instead their many resources to grow and develop. The United Kingdom will support both countries through bilateral aid programmes, through our contribution in the European Union and through the training we are providing to each country.

The arrest of Charles Taylor and his transfer to the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague was a particular triumph, not only for West Africa but for Africa as a whole, and for the system of international justice, because it demonstrates an ending of impunity. Liberia, like Sierra Leone, therefore also has the chance to build on its peace now. Both countries should focus on nation-building, good governance, the fight against corruption, entrenching democracy through free and fair elections, tackling the root causes of conflict, such as youth unemployment and access to justice, encouraging economic growth and building efficient and effective institutions to deliver national services. The holding of presidential elections in Sierra Leone next year will be a particular test.

We all need to continue to be vigilant, to watch developments in the region carefully. Worries remain over Guinea, which has the potential to destabilize the entire Mano River basin. We must all do what we can to work with regional actors to help bring about a peaceful and democratic transition there. In Côte d'Ivoire, the international working group must ensure that the roadmap to a durable peace, including free and fair elections and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, is fully implemented. In Gambia, the ongoing investigations into the failed coup in March are a continuing concern.

But West Africa has reason to be hopeful. What is clear to me is that we must work to ensure that the countries of the region can succeed together. Any individual failures will only jeopardize the prospect of gains for the others. That is why this thematic debate is so timely. That is why, as the presidential statement we will adopt today calls for, the United Nations in general and this Council in particular must continue to take a regional perspective. The region continues to have the Council's support and engagement as well as that of the rest of the United Nations, financial institutions and the international community at large. It deserves it.

What that means is international support by all who can contribute, so that in any individual country and across the region, we tackle the three essential elements of peacebuilding: the ending and the prevention of conflict, delivering political progress based on institutions and the rule of law, and providing sustained economic development and implementing the Millennium Development Goals. West Africa demands and deserves our support for those goals.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We wish to join the other delegations that spoke before us, Mr. President, in welcoming your presence and that of the other ministers in the Council today. We also thank your delegation for having organized this meeting and for having prepared a draft presidential statement, which we heartily support.

This debate offers us yet another opportunity to review progress made in efforts to achieve and consolidate peace and stability in West Africa, to reaffirm the various proposals aimed at ridding the region of conflict and to encourage further action by the Governments of the region in cooperation with the Security Council, other United Nations entities, the donor community and other stakeholders, in order to ensure that West Africa remains free of conflict and embarks on a path towards sustainable economic progress.

As in similar cases elsewhere, there is no shortage of ideas on how to bring peace to conflict areas or, in this case, on maintaining and consolidating peace in post-conflict situations in West Africa. What is lacking, in our opinion, is the will, the resolve and the resources to effectively implement the many recommendations already on the table.

In his several country reports, the Secretary-General makes some very pertinent proposals. The Security Council, for its part, has passed several resolutions and issued presidential statements on situations of armed conflict in West Africa. Since the early 1990s, the Council has deployed peacekeeping operations and established peacebuilding support offices in countries that were in conflict, which resulted in a return to normalcy in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia and hopefully, in Côte d'Ivoire soon. Further, the Council has established sanctions regimes ranging from arms, diamonds, timber and oil embargoes to targeted measures such as travel bans and assets freezes in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia

and Sierra Leone. However, such measures will be successful only if they are closely monitored and adequately supervised to ensure that there are no breaches and if, in cases of non-compliance, remedial action is seen to have been taken.

Besides the United Nations and the Security Council, the West African countries themselves, in collaboration with other countries and institutions, have made a range of recommendations on ways to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and achieve and consolidate peace in the region. Factors such as lack of good governance, competition for resources, obstruction of democratic processes, poor leadership, corrupt practices, weak institutions and many others have been identified as underlying causes and major sources of social upheaval and civil strife. Many of these practices are in clear breach of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which suggests that the Protocol needs to be respected and observed.

We welcome the cooperation in peacekeeping between the United Nations and ECOWAS. Indeed, we pay tribute to the efforts that saw Charles Taylor indicted before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. That signifies the resolve of the international community that impunity will not be tolerated. Further action to deal with impunity should be taken.

We also pay tribute to the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) on its increased subregional cooperation, particularly in preventing illegal cross-border activities.

To conclude, my delegation would like to emphasize the following points.

First, at the regional level, the West African countries must strive to strengthen their institutions of governance and promote good governance, transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources. They must fight corruption and impunity, observe the rule of law, reform the security and judicial sectors, revamp their economies to alleviate poverty and create employment and work with civil society to educate their populations regarding their civic and democratic rights. We encourage them to ensure that such measures are in place.

Secondly, the African Union and its Peace and Security Council, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and ECOWAS must all play their part effectively and work together to forge closer collaboration with countries in conflict and in post-conflict situations in West Africa.

Thirdly, the international community, particularly development partners and the international financial institutions, should continue to provide and should increase financial support to those countries that are recovering from war in West Africa, with a view to preventing the recurrence of conflict.

Fourthly, we encourage countries to develop a relationship based on partnership, rather than on dependency, with their former colonies in West Africa in the interest of achieving, maintaining and consolidating peace and stability.

Finally, we call upon the United Nations, the Security Council and the entire United Nations family, including the Peacebuilding Commission, to enhance their efforts and to work closely with the subregion to increase the momentum in bringing peace to Côte d'Ivoire and to ensure that the investment made in post-conflict countries in West Africa is not lost to chance.

The President: A number of speakers remain on my list. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5509 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5509th meeting

Wednesday, 9 August 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Nana Akufo-Addo	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Cheng Lie
	Congo	Mr. Okio
	Denmark	Mrs. Wandel
	France	Mr. Serman
	Greece	Mr. Papadopoulos
	Japan	Mr. Kitagawa
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sitnikov
	Slovakia	Mr. Marton
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Whineray
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Nelson

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/610)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-46124 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Liberia, Niger and Pakistan in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

I wish to remind all speakers, as I indicated at the morning session, to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Guatemala, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Skinner-Klee (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating the Republic of Ghana on its presidency of the Security Council this month. It is an honour to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs of your country, Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, chairing the meeting. We welcome the initiative to discuss peace consolidation in West Africa, because it enables us, in the Council and in general, to review the situation prevailing in the countries of that important subregion of Africa, in order to contribute to finding comprehensive solutions to the various challenges facing the region. In that context, we welcome the presence and support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Ould-Abdallah, as well as the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Ibn Chambas.

Guatemala has closely observed the violent conflicts involving various countries of that region of Africa. Guatemala itself experienced an internal conflict that lasted four decades, and we understand the urgent need to strive for peace, stability and development. We also understand the importance of regional cooperation and the benefits of strengthening integration mechanisms.

At no other time in the past have we been as close to establishing a favourable environment for the creation and strengthening of international capacities and for articulating strategies that will help to achieve sustainable development in the region. The revitalization of ECOWAS and its links with the African Union, the way in which it works with the help of the United Nations and the support of other international actors are steps in the right direction for these efforts and thus, bode well for a better future for the people of the region.

We are glad that the document circulated for this meeting (S/2006/610) has acknowledged the need to strengthen and bolster that kind of concerted action. Guatemala strongly supports the high-level meetings of the United Nations Secretariat and regional organizations, as well as the creation of the Standing Committee. We believe those will help keep us focused in the correct strategic direction and offer general guidance on the practical level. We must now take care of those mechanisms to ensure that they are effective, binding and flexible and that they always act in keeping with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

We must remember that security matters are of a priority nature, and cooperation in military and political areas should be sustained and coordinated. However, we believe that cooperation should go further and should try to address the precarious humanitarian situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in the regions. The synergy between ECOWAS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in that area seems to be a sound approach.

We also attach similar importance to another joint effort that we believe will contribute to peace consolidation in the region, namely, the cooperation among United Nations entities that are designed to harmonize disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, while taking into account the special needs of women and children as the most vulnerable individuals, as well as the disabled.

Good governance, the strengthening of justice systems and the formulation and pursuit of human rights policies will not be possible without strengthening national capacities and keeping those capacities up-to-date. Here too, we see a special role for actors in the region, who should supplement United Nations actions aimed at continued identification of the priorities and actions needed for the elaboration of effective strategies and programmes to overcome challenges and contribute to the region's development. In that connection, we welcome what appears to be a Council practice: the incorporation of elements anticipating that need within the framework of peacekeeping operations.

I should like to refer briefly to the role of development of the Peacebuilding Commission, which, following its initial organizational and informational meetings, must provide concrete follow-up to actions needed to stimulate peace consolidation and attain the wider objective of sustainable development in the region.

Given the experience acquired through the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict, we believe it is important that the Peacebuilding Commission cooperate proactively not only in the important work of mobilizing international cooperation, but also in helping national authorities establish priorities and devise realistic strategies and coherent policies adapted to the circumstances and environment of each country.

We must bear in mind that peace consolidation is not achieved only by preventing outbreaks of violence or physically rebuilding a country or its legal framework. The Peacebuilding Commission must go further and support comprehensive changes that eliminate practices leading to social, economic and political exclusion and transform State institutions so that citizens can regain confidence in them and participate in them.

Therefore, the cooperation that the Peacebuilding Commission can provide to the Security Council should be to offer a mechanism to follow up on the initial work of maintaining peace and security, in which all actors involved in a particular transition and recovery process can interact openly and transparently, addressing the broader areas involved in peace consolidation — areas in which the Economic and Social Council, in its particular area of responsibility, has tasks to accomplish. That would ultimately contribute to better interaction, coordination and coherence not only between the two Councils but also throughout the United Nations system.

Finally, Guatemala notes with satisfaction the recent creation of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, established by the Security Council in order to consolidate peace in that country, help the Government to strengthen human rights and achieve the Millennium Goals, improve transparency and cooperate with the country so that it can hold democratic elections in 2007. We have the same expectations for Côte d'Ivoire in October 2006.

Guatemala welcomes the developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau. Likewise, the positive changes that have occurred in Liberia are true examples of stability and strengthening in the region. These examples make us optimistic about the achievement of a promising future for all our brothers and sisters in the region.

The President: I now call on the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The following countries also align themselves with this statement: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The European Union welcomes this opportunity to exchange views and contribute to the process of consolidating peace in West Africa. The EU commends the considerable progress made in recent years in establishing peace and security in West Africa, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Liberia has held its first free and fair elections and has chosen Africa's first woman President to lead the country into reconstruction and recovery. Liberia's democratic Government has taken bold measures to improve the transparency of its budget. We welcome the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme, which has already assisted in the partial lifting of sanctions. The arrest and trial of former President Taylor demonstrate that those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity or violations of

international humanitarian law cannot escape justice. The EU appreciates the essential work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and its vital contributions to the establishment of the rule of law in the region.

The European Union welcomes the request of Sierra Leone to be included on the agenda of the newly established Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the Commission's positive response to that request. Sierra Leone will now benefit from the Commission's support for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery during the crucial time of the preparation of the June 2007 elections.

Notwithstanding those positive developments, many West African countries remain in precarious situations. The European Union remains concerned about the fragile political and socio-economic situation in Guinea-Bissau.

In neighbouring Guinea, the reform process has stalled. The EU strongly reiterates its call for the new Government to engage in a dialogue with all parties concerned in order to improve political stability and pave the way for democratic reform. The volatile situation in Côte d'Ivoire continues to hamper peace and stability in the region. The EU is concerned about the serious delays in the peace process, in particular in the implementation of the road map aimed at the scheduling of elections by the end of October this year. The stability of the entire West African region depends to a great extent on developments in Côte d'Ivoire.

The European Union adopted a comprehensive Strategy for Africa in December 2005. Within the framework of the Strategy, the EU is committed to strengthening the dialogue on peace and security in Africa and to supporting the efforts of its African partners to build stability on the continent. In line with the Strategy, the EU maintains an open dialogue with the African Union and with subregional organizations on a wide range of issues related to peace and security on the continent. Notably through its African Peace Facility, the EU actively supports institutional capacity-building in these areas.

A year earlier, in 2004, the European Union adopted its Strategy for West Africa on conflict prevention, management and resolution. The objective of the Strategy is to promote regional approaches to West African transnational problems and to improve coordination in close cooperation with the main partners active in the region.

The European Union is well aware that national solutions alone are not sufficient to address the security threats in West Africa, owing to the cross-border nature of problems such as small arms and light weapons, child solders, refugees, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, human trafficking and immigration. In addition to providing its support to each country of the region through national programmes, the EU is committed to a regional approach and to improved coordination with the key partners active in the region, namely, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Office for West Africa.

The European Union, as Co-Chair of the International Contact Group on the Mano River Basin, is also closely involved in a number of political dialogues in the region within the framework of the International Working Group on Côte d'Ivoire and looks forward to the first meeting of the International Working Group on Guinea-Bissau. The Special Representative of the European Union Presidency for the Mano River Union will ensure the continued promotion of peace and stability with political interlocutors in the region.

The European Union also engages in internal cooperation and coordination among its member States, relying on the coherent and harmonized use of various instruments at its disposal, such as political dialogue and development cooperation.

The European Union attaches special importance to the development of crisis prevention, management and resolution capabilities in Africa.

An EU Action Plan for support for peace and security in Africa under the European Security and Defence Policy was adopted in 2004. Using the full mix at its disposal, the EU combines European Commission development programmes and European Security and Defence Policy actions to support African capacity-building in the field of peace and security. Efforts are under way to further strengthen EU support to African capabilities for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Against that background, the EU continues to be fully engaged in conflict prevention and management in West Africa in support of regional organizations and the countries of West Africa in their efforts to enhance peace and stability.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Namibia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Shiweva (Namibia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa and commend you and your delegation for this important initiative. We also thank you for the thoughtful concept paper (S/2006/610, annex) that forms the basis of the Council's deliberations today.

Namibia believes that peace and stability in West Africa are fundamental to achieving sustainable development, not only in that subregion but also in Africa as a whole. It is in that context that Namibia continues to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions in that subregion, by contributing troops as well as military and civilian police observers.

We note with satisfaction the steady progress that has been made in Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, and we commend the role played by the United Nations, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international community in ensuring peace and security and laying the foundations for democracy and the rule of law. Functional Governments and democratic institutions have been established; improved health and education systems in these countries have also been put in place.

However, serious attention should be paid to the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants and the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees. Cooperation within and among the countries of the region is required for a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. This should be done in a balanced, comprehensive and transparent manner. Peacebuilding efforts must focus on security, the rule of law and the provision of basic services and social and economic infrastructure.

We are happy to note that the newly created Peacebuilding Commission has agreed to focus its work on the situations in Sierra Leone and in Burundi. Its performance will be tested and judged upon the results of the consideration of those situations. It should, therefore, prove its ability and effectiveness in that daunting challenge before it.

With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, we are pleased to note that the Pretoria Agreement on the peace process in that country continues to be respected and adhered to by the parties in their implementation of their agreements. We are encouraged by the efforts of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union in bringing about a lasting solution to the problems in Côte d'Ivoire. We applaud the mediation role of President Mbeki of South Africa on behalf of the African Union and encourage continuous consultations with the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

However, we have doubts about the peacekeeping efforts in that country, particularly the command relations of the United Nations peacekeeping force on one hand and the international force on the other, to which the Government of Côte d'Ivoire has referred on several occasions. Furthermore, we are concerned about the fact that the elections in Côte d'Ivoire continue to be postponed. We are, however, hopeful that pre-election tasks such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, voter identification and registration, the designation of polling stations and polling officers and other related assignments will be completed in good time for peaceful and democratic elections to take place.

It must be emphasized that reconciliation is the key to sustainable peace. Reconciliation is a two-way process that should aim at forging a spirit of forgiveness rather than vengeance or retaliation. However, a distinct line has to be drawn between reconciliation and the search for justice. While we recognize that crimes committed during a conflict should be accounted for, we are also cognizant of the need for an independent, competent judicial system and an open trial process to be put in place, not to punish those who committed crimes, but to rehabilitate them and to correct the mistakes that were made. In this connection, my delegation fully supports the role and authority of the International Criminal Court, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We further support their full utilization and funding.

As in any other conflict, the majority of those in West Africa who have suffered due to armed conflict are women and children. In that connection, we strongly believe that a post-conflict peacebuilding strategy and programmes should be designed for women, children and girls, especially in the areas of education and employment creation.

While we fully agree that Africa should take the lead in finding solutions to Africa's problems, we wish to reiterate that the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, should not abdicate its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. In that regard, we call for the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in promoting durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Democratically elected Governments should be supported and strengthened. Furthermore, the DDR of former combatants should be completed within established time frames and all former combatants should be placed in the socio-economic mainstream of society. We are hopeful, in this regard, that the Peacebuilding Commission will fill the gap by exerting and coordinating peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

We urge the United Nations agencies dealing with Africa to assist the AU and subregional organizations in promoting good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Enhancing the capacity of the AU in conflict prevention, management and resolution is of paramount importance.

Finally, my delegation would like to underscore that greater investment should be made in conflict prevention, as we believe that conflict prevention is cost-effective, in terms of both saving lives and financial resources. Let us, therefore, strive to establish an early warning system that will enable us to detect the signs of conflict and address them head-on before the real conflict occurs.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Egypt, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great personal pleasure, Sir, to see you presiding over the Security Council today as head of Ghanaian diplomacy and to read out to the Security Council a statement by His Excellency Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who, due to the situation in the Middle East, is unfortunately unable to participate in this important meeting in person, in response to your kind invitation. His statement reads as follows.

> "Mr. President, I wish to express to you personally and to the Government of sisterly Ghana my gratitude and appreciation for your initiative in calling for this important meeting of the Security Council at the ministerial level to debate peace consolidation in West Africa, which is a significant component of our efforts to achieve peace and stability in the African continent and of the maintenance of international peace and security. This initiative, taken together with that of the United Republic of Tanzania last January on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, testifies to the importance that African countries attach to assuming a leading role in the settlement of their regional and subregional problems and to contributing effectively to meeting the aspirations of both Africa and the international community.
>
> "Egypt is strongly committed to working with its brothers and sisters in Africa to achieve peace, stability and development. As a current member of the African Union's Peace and Security Council and the Organizational Committee of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, Egypt attaches great importance to reinforcing the regional approach in addressing peace consolidation. To that end, Egypt believes in the need to develop and strengthen the institutional partnership between the African Union and the African subregional organizations on the one hand, and the United Nations on the other.
>
> "However, in order to ensure the success of such institutional relationships and to increase its potential to achieve its objectives, the requisite partnership must be based on a comprehensive vision for peace consolidation that addresses the concept of peace in an integrated manner, including the security, political, development, cultural, social, and human dimensions and ensuring the coordination of the efforts and roles of all influential actors. All that should be founded on the principles and purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. Such a comprehensive approach to peace is the only sure way to prevent conflict and relapse into conflict, as well as to ensure security, stability and development in Africa.
>
> "Despite the important role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, experience has shown that there are

limits to the capacity and role of the Council in addressing the requirements of the transition from conflict to comprehensive development, particularly as it has repeatedly hesitated to open channels of genuine and effective coordination with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant regional and subregional organizations.

"Consequently, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as an advisory intergovernmental forum for coordinating the efforts and roles of the organs and actors capable of contributing to peace consolidation was an important achievement for the United Nations and for Africa. Egypt, as the coordinator for the African Group in New York on that issue, supported the initiative and contributed to all stages of its realization. I am confident that the substance and conclusions of our discussions today will enrich the prospective discussions of the Peacebuilding Commission on Sierra Leone in particular, as well as its future thematic discussions relevant to peace consolidation in Africa in general.

"Allow me now to lay out Egypt's views on the elements proposed by you, Sir, as the focus of our discussions today, as contained in the valuable concept paper that was distributed earlier and on which I congratulate you.

"West Africa has undoubtedly entered a new phase in the settlement of the conflicts that hampered its potential over the past decade. The achievement in Sierra Leone in the past few years is a model for the convergence of the will of its people, together with their neighbours in other West African States, the African Union and the international community, as represented by the United Nations, the European Union and other partners. Equally encouraging are the confident steps taken by Liberia on the same path to peace and national reconciliation, which will enable it to achieve the required peace and stability.

"Moreover, we believe that with more international economic and technical support, Guinea-Bissau should witness increasing political stability and sustainable development. We are also confident that the wisdom and the will of the united people of Côte d'Ivoire will enable it to transcend its temporary plight with the help and support of the African Union. All those developments prove that West Africa is set to take a major political, security and economic leap, supported primarily by the firm resolve and resilience of its peoples and their aspirations to own their future and to espouse a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation, together with their efforts to reinforce the rule of law and the foundations of democracy and to expand their political and economic participation.

"Equally important is the need to address cross-border issues with implications for regional stability, such as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its links to the illegal exploitation of natural resources; the recruitment of mercenaries; improved settlement of the status and future of refuges; the settlement of land ownership disputes; and other issues that could fuel conflicts and wars in the subregion.

"To that end, we need to adopt a two-tiered integrated strategy for peacebuilding and peace consolidation. The first tier should focus on the direct and individual needs of the countries under consideration, while the second tier should address the needs of West Africa from a subregional perspective aimed at enhancing cooperation among the West African States in the areas of security and economic development and at supporting the pioneering role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in those areas.

"As for the direct needs of individual countries, the proposed peacebuilding strategy must emanate from a national vision presented by the country under consideration, depicting its own priorities in a manner that would allow for the most efficient coordination among the various contributing actors, with the aim of capitalizing on the existing political momentum and available resources. We expect the Peacebuilding Commission to play a lead role in ensuring such coordination. Moreover, past experience has shown that the point of departure for achieving sustainable peace is the institutional, human and legislative capacity-building of the country emerging from conflict, in parallel with the rehabilitation of public services, such as

education, health and security. We need to ensure parallel progress on both tracks of peacebuilding.

"I wish to emphasize, in that context, that the success of any regional or international effort is linked to the degree to which such efforts correspond to the nature and specificities of the country under consideration and to which they avoid the imposition of uniform models, concepts, approaches and ideas that do not take those specificities into account and that could be interpreted as an attempt to impose trusteeship on those countries, thus rendering all such efforts counterproductive to the objective of sustainable peace. Egypt insists that any approach to addressing the needs and requirements of countries emerging from conflict must reinforce national ownership of all peacebuilding activities and related concepts.

"Moving to the second tier of the integrated strategy, aimed at meeting subregional requirements for peace consolidation, we believe in the importance of further enhancing the roles played by the African Union and ECOWAS in the establishment of a system of security and integration based on respect for the sovereignty of States over their own territory, including measures to secure borders against the illicit trafficking of arms and other illegal commercial activities. In that respect, in cooperation with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, from 17 to 19 June 2006, Egypt hosted a meeting of an international working group on combating the illicit exploitation of the non-natural resources in Africa. We believe that such measures must also include the initiation of an early warning system capable of containing conflicts by capitalizing on regional good offices, the completion of ongoing efforts to establish a stand-by force for the purposes of peacekeeping and rapid deployment, and enhancing cooperation in the area of exchange of information and experience on lessons learned from the management of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Other measures aimed at encouraging trade and facilitating movement across borders for the purpose of social and commercial exchange are also of immense significance.

"All such measures would also require strong support from the United Nations, the international financial institutions and the donor countries through the provision of technical and financial assistance, as well as other necessary expertise and support, to the African Union and ECOWAS in order to enable both organizations to discharge their roles in that sphere.

"Egypt maintains high-profile relations with all West African States and is committed to enhancing their capacity to achieve their national priorities and interests through existing bilateral mechanisms. The Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa is one important mechanism in that area and is currently preparing to support the reintegration programme in Liberia through small projects aimed at providing employment opportunities to demobilized elements and to contribute to security sector reform and capacity-building for the Liberian national police. Egypt remains prepared to support the efforts of its sisters and brothers in West Africa in their quest to build and consolidate comprehensive and sustainable peace that would fulfil their aspirations."

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Senegal, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased, Mr. President, along with offering you my sincere congratulations, to tell you how proud my delegation is to see you bringing the mark of African leadership to the Security Council during this month of August 2006, a month replete with threats, particularly due to the current upheavals in the Middle East.

In reiterating to you the unswerving support of your friend and brother, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, Minister of State, who, because of urgent duties was unable to be with us today, as he would have wished, I should like on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you and, through you, your country, Ghana, so dear to my country, on the very timely choice of the theme of the discussion which brings us together today. I should like to convey respectful greetings to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Qatar and of Côte d'Ivoire, to the Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs of Guinea, to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and to the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General for West Africa, and to pay tribute to them for their outstanding contributions to this discussion. I am grateful to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Council for having authorized me to address you on behalf of my country, Senegal.

After decades of deadly upheavals that have beset a number of countries in West Africa, the subregion seems recently to be experiencing a return to social peace. Today, this normalization is to be seen in Liberia, in Sierra Leone and in Guinea-Bissau, which once seemed to be caught in an endless spiral of violence. In Côte d'Ivoire, a country which was known as a friendly, hospitable and stable country, the process of national reconciliation is now taking shape. Thus, the subregion is now enjoying favourable conditions where the diligent support of the international community would help to finally ground West Africa in a positive process of peace and common prosperity.

In order to achieve this noble objective, we must take the steps required by this favourable situation. I will now merely refer to four of these steps. The first step relates to consolidating confidence-building measures. In countries of the subregion that are emerging from conflict, where peace remains precarious and fragile, special attention needs to be given to the effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. This exercise should include, to the extent possible, the integration into State institutions, including the army, of elements coming from various factions. That is particularly crucial because peace cannot be reduced merely to a cessation of hostilities and the conclusion of an agreement. Peace, above all, means cultivating mutual trust and undoing attempts to take recourse in violence. Clearly, the implementation of this strategy can work only with the substantial support of international donors and the full involvement of the new Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), and the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations.

The second step involves speeding up the process of integration. The efforts of ECOWAS to integrate member States must be strengthened. Achievements already made in this area are many and encouraging and are reflected at the ECOWAS level by an abundant juridical and institutional framework. Among other achievements, I would refer to the treaty that established the Community and its various protocols, in particular, the one relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, established in Lome in 1999, and the one relating to Democracy and Good Governance, adopted in Dakar in 2001.

The work of consolidating the achievements of the Community must take place through a proactive campaign so that peoples of the subregion internalize the ideals of ECOWAS and so that all States conform without delay to the spirit and the letter of the Community's rules. In this campaign, civil society and non-governmental organizations have a decisive role to play.

The third step is to promote the security-development tandem. More robust struggle is required to deal with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The illicit circulation of these weapons encourages the appearance of criminal gangs, either domestic or foreign, whose evil deeds undermine the very foundation of States and render fragile young nations under construction.

On this subject, I would recall the danger posed by mercenaries, a phenomenon that was strongly denounced a little less than three years ago in this very Chamber by Minister of State Gadio during an open debate on that question (see S/PV.4720). In order to ward off the danger of small arms and illicit light weapons and by their users, in 1998, ECOWAS adopted the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa, which has now become the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, supported by the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development, which benefits from support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The support of the international community for this programme is still needed to improve this vital sector of Community security.

But, make no mistake, poverty causes violence, as reflected in the shocking, unbearable image of young West Africans, overwhelmed by despair and forced to take set sail on the waters of the Atlantic aboard makeshift boats seeking some hypothetical better life. For many of them, the odyssey ends in tragedy. This distressing phenomenon is a reminder to our partners of the need to establish with West Africa more effective cooperation to convince young people

that life is also worth living in their own countries, which are so rich in economic possibilities.

Finally, the fourth step involves consolidating democracy and the rule of law. Efforts at the State level must be continued to further develop a democratic culture and the rule of law. All sectors of national life must participate in this sacred endeavour, primarily schools, civil society, non-governmental organizations, opinion-makers and the media.

With regard to the media, journalists need to be better trained and ethics committees must be established to avoid a situation where, because of irresponsibility or negligence, tension or conflicts are created, with devastating effects. Another participant in the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law should be the justice system which must be free and independent in a society where citizens who believe that their rights have been violated are able to have recourse to an ombudsman or to a State mediator in an environment where executive, legislative and judicial branches coexist and are strictly independent.

The normalization of the political situation in ECOWAS countries should not be considered to be irreversible — far from it. If we consider the classic case of Guinea-Bissau, we can see that lack of support from the international community at a crucial time, when the country needed to consolidate the achievements of peace quickly, led to the return of the demons of violence. That is a constant that applies to all countries emerging from conflict or crisis, whether they are in the West African subregion, elsewhere in Africa or in other parts of the world.

I reiterate my heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. President, for having organized this important debate. I venture to hope that your initiative will help to raise awareness with regard to the consolidation of peace and stability in West Africa.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): I would like to thank the Ghanaian presidency for having convened this timely open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa, a subject of the utmost importance for my country. I would like to extend our warmest greetings to you, Sir, Minister Nana Akufo-Addo, as you preside over the meeting.

I am also grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, and to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for their informative statements.

This Council meeting addresses two topics of particular interest to all of us: peacebuilding and Africa. Brazil has long held that lasting peace can be achieved in post-conflict situations only by means of the early implementation of concrete measures aimed at attaining social, economic and institutional development.

It is in the interests of the international community to contribute to the consolidation of peace in West Africa. Peace, security and development not only are crucial for the people in the region, but also help spread progress to a wider area in the continent. In that sense, Brazil considers the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic, which comprises countries from West Africa and South America, to be a valuable instrument in fostering peace and development and in promoting closer cooperation among countries on both sides of the ocean.

In recent years, countries in West Africa have been involved in a number of conflicts. But today, thanks to the return of peace, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau can aspire to enjoying economic growth and political stability; Côte d'Ivoire is making every effort to return to constitutional rule.

The stability of those countries, however, is fragile and requires continuous support. For this reason, the various United Nations missions in the region should be maintained and reinforced, and cooperation among them should open a new and dynamic process to tackle cross-border issues. Without neglecting the immediate humanitarian and security needs, the main task of the United Nations is to support long-term initiatives in West Africa that can produce a "virtuous cycle" of socio-political inclusion, sustainable development and peace, thereby preventing a relapse into violence and political instability.

That long-term effort must be predicated on the understanding that no peace is sustainable if the root causes of the conflict are not addressed, as rightly elaborated in the concept paper prepared for this debate (S/2006/610).

The countries in West Africa require the creation and reinforcement of capacity-building, which is essential for a prosperous and stable economy. In addition, cooperation among neighbouring countries is to be encouraged. We are of the view that, in the short run, two interrelated issues deserve special attention: the reduction of youth unemployment, and programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and for security sector reform.

Unemployment deprives young people of a legitimate source of income and makes them prey to warlords in their petty but bloody conflicts. Foreign investment and trade can help put the region back on the track of development. DDR programmes must have reliable resources in all of their phases and, when a peacekeeping operation is deployed, should rely on assessed resources for funding. To that list, one could add the use made of the natural resources of the region. It is important to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the proceeds of which are used to fuel war. The Kimberly Process has shown us the way ahead.

The newly established Peacebuilding Commission represents an important instrument for supporting the consolidation of peace in West Africa. We are happy that Sierra Leone will be considered in the country-specific configuration of the Commission. The Peacebuilding Commission has been created to garner resources and support in order to address the problems of countries in the rebuilding process. The Commission's work on Sierra Leone will certainly lead us to understand better the regional dynamics and the needs of other countries in the region.

In West Africa, the Brazilian Government considers that Guinea-Bissau deserves particular attention. That country has struggled to achieve stability, but its situation is fragile. The lack of economic growth remains a source of unrest, and State institutions sorely need to be supported and strengthened. The United Nations and its Member States should show, with practical deeds — as Brazil has tried to do — its solidarity with Guinea-Bissau. The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and the India-Brazil-South Africa Forum are also assisting that country with projects that, we hope, will have a positive and immediate impact on the population.

It is important that the Council continue its quarterly review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and consider broadening its mandate. We firmly believe that investing a little more time and money in Guinea-Bissau now will spare suffering in the future and obviate the need to return after a hasty exit.

Brazil would like to pay tribute to the endeavours of the African Union in West Africa. I would also like to congratulate ECOWAS for its relentless efforts in the defence of peace and development in the area. In particular, I would like to express my Government's appreciation for the decision to transform the moratorium on small arms into a convention, which will represent a credible framework for action. We equally commend the contribution made by the United Nations Office for West Africa in drafting the convention.

My country has a special interest in the development of Africa, the source of the majority of the Brazilian population. The current administration of President Lula attaches high priority to strengthening relations with the African continent. We are committed to supporting all initiatives designed to make the West African countries prosperous and stable.

I believe that this debate provides further evidence of the relevant and active role of Ghana in building peace in the region. As President Lula said in welcoming President John Kufuor on his recent visit to Brazil,

> "for decades Ghana has been writing a fundamental page in the African saga. The heroic struggle of Kwame Nkrumah against colonialism, for the right of Africa to decide its destiny, enthused the continent and the world. Many Brazilians mirrored themselves in that example".

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of India, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sen (India): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this open debate on the theme of peace consolidation in West Africa. This initiative of the Ghanaian presidency of the Security Council is timely and meaningful, and we welcome it. It was to be expected from a nation that has consistently made noteworthy contributions to peace, not only in its own region, but internationally as well. For me personally and for my country, it is an added pleasure to address the Foreign Minister of Ghana presiding today, given our traditionally close bilateral relations and our

experience of the wisdom and insight that Nana Akufo-Addo has always brought to any international forum he has graced with his presence. I have also been asked by our Minister of State, Anand Sharma, to convey to you, Sir, his personal greetings and warmest good wishes.

To save time, I shall not adhere entirely to my written text.

The history of conflict in West Africa has shown that stability can be imposed for a while by force of arms and the determined involvement of the world. But history also tells us that such stability is often short-lived. Peace achieved through force of arms is often, to quote the Secretary-General, a situation that is stable but fragile.

Indeed, recent World Bank studies emphasize that countries that have suffered conflict in the recent past are also likely to see conflict return: the risk that the country will fall back into conflict within the first five years of the end of a conflict is nearly 50 per cent. That worrisome statistic is made worse by the fact that armed conflict inevitably increases military expenditure in the countries involved. Such expenditure not only crowds out other public spending but, on a worldwide basis, has come to exceed spending on international development assistance. Furthermore, given the current international economic order, the advantages obtained through employment generation in parts of Africa have been squandered through negative resource flows, low commodity prices, a lack of access to international markets and the debt trap. In other words, global conditions make it likely that the vicious circle of conflict-peace-conflict becomes self-sustaining. Thus, the creation of peace has rarely ensured that peace will endure.

The overarching question before the world today is how to find ways to consolidate peace. In other words, how can regional organizations and the United Nations prevent States emerging from old conflicts from lapsing into new conflict situations? We agree that, in this context, we must promote sustained, equitable and employment-driven economic growth, as that is an inextricable part of the process of building durable peace. The effort to achieve these goals needs to be managed institutionally and driven internationally. It is this that gives relevance to the newly established Peacebuilding Commission.

We believe that conflict prevention must include operational prevention efforts, which include responses to immediate and pressing crises through preventive diplomacy and structural prevention, which implies long-term structural preventive measures to prevent crises from arising or prevent them from recurring. The latter often involves a long-term commitment to help vulnerable and poor countries develop human and institutional resources through increased development assistance. While peacebuilding focuses on preventing conditions that foster conflict, development focuses on the structural conditions that prevent growth and equity and thereby provide breeding grounds for conflict. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding must be part of the same continuum, if peacekeeping is to succeed.

Interestingly, studies show that military interventions in conflict-ridden areas are actually more expensive than preventive approaches. Estimates show that the international community spent approximately $200 billion on seven major interventions in the 1990s, while it is estimated that a successful preventive approach would have cost nearly $130 billion less.

Fundamental to a successful and long-term preventive approach are sound macroeconomic policies promoting sustained employment-driven growth. Expenditure on social sector programmes of poverty eradication, education — in particular the education of women — immunization and basic health and basic infrastructure creates conditions for sustained economic growth.

In that context, I am tempted to note that developing societies such as ours do not live on bread alone, but equally on solidarity. India and others have written off the debt of the seven highly indebted poor countries. India will continue its economic and scientific initiatives, such as the Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement (TEAM 9), which involves a concessional credit of $500 million along with technology transfers to countries in the West African region; further cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development; and the satellite and fibre-optic connectivity mission for the entire African continent, announced by our President.

Another essential pillar of the process of economic transformation involves the development of effective mechanisms to resolve social tensions arising from the legacy of conflict. Such mechanisms include rehabilitation, reconciliation and reconstruction. It also includes the development of credible institutions of governance; stable political structures, including

political parties; and credible strategies to effectively mobilize human and material resources. Hence the Peacebuilding Commission must not only work with the Security Council but also, and above all, take into consideration inputs from other United Nations bodies and work under the overall guidance of the General Assembly. Effective coordination and consultation with regional groups and organizations must be encouraged as part of that effort.

Another key element for peace consolidation is the development of an overall country strategy framework to deal with post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. What is crucial here is national ownership, as many speakers before me have pointed out. It is the only pragmatic answer to a practical problem. In order to ensure that peacekeeping blends into peacebuilding, it may occasionally be necessary to operate without clear-cut national authority. But, in spite of that, it is essential that embryonic national ownership be respected through clear guidelines for ascertaining and respecting the views of civil society and community representatives.

That brings me to good governance. Strong local, regional and national institutions are fundamental for societal transformation. Without legitimate laws, justice cannot be effective; without minimum standards of social equality, one cannot guarantee principles of justice and fairness. Thus, it is essential that good governance prescribed for recipient countries should also be practiced by the international institutions doing the prescribing. The two speakers before me pointed to success stories in, for example, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. We are engaged in Guinea-Bissau and, to some extent, in Sierra Leone. But it is also important to look at the recent past. There, one finds that — to cite one example in West Africa — Sierra Leone, which collapsed in civil war in 1990, was under an extensive International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme from 1994 to 1998. When civil war broke out again, it had spent 83 per cent of the period under an IMF programme. Therefore, the reform of international institutions — in particular the Bretton Woods institutions — to increase the voice and participation of developing countries is absolutely essential.

Lastly, it is essential that the process of peace consolidation be implemented at various levels. At one level, the Peacebuilding Commission will implement its mandate of proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery, ensuring predictable financing and developing best practices for cooperation among relevant actors and stakeholders. At another level, effective regional initiatives are essential. In that context, we fully support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union in cooperating to address questions related to peace and security in West Africa. Finally, there is the national level, where it is essential that international institutions and partners support the efforts of countries emerging from conflict through highly concessional aid; debt waivers; assistance with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; employment generation strategies; and the extension of appropriate technologies. It is only through integrated action at all these levels that the consolidation of peace can be made effective and durable.

The President: I thank the representative of India for his attempt to respect the four-minute rule.

I now call on the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your delegation's presidency of the Security Council this month. We are convinced that you, both personally and as a representative of your country, will play an outstanding role in leading the work of the Council to success. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his efforts as President of the Council last month. In addition, I cannot fail to associate myself with earlier speakers in thanking the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who made a very important statement to the Council this morning; Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa; and Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who have participated effectively in the debate on this agenda item.

I am speaking today on behalf of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shalghem, who is unable to take part in this important meeting. He has asked me, Sir, to express our gratitude to your friendly country, Ghana, for the initiative to debate the agenda item "Peace consolidation in West Africa".

My country's participation in this debate reflects its interest in the subject and its concern for strengthening international, regional and national efforts to build peace, security and stability in the West African countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. We consider those countries to be our sisters, and my country has special bilateral relationships with them. We are all members of the same regional integration organization, the African Union (AU), of which Libya was a founding member. Indeed, the AU has played a very important role in addressing many of the continent's problems, particularly those of West Africa.

This debate is of particularly critical importance given the destructive internal conflicts that have taken place in many countries of the region, including in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. These conflicts have led to a loss of control over those countries' national institutions and have resulted in a high death toll among innocent civilians. Indeed, they have destroyed infrastructure and property and have caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of those countries and has given rise to the illicit exploitation of their natural resources. These events have had a negative impact on economic, political and social life after a decade of conflict.

At long last, national leaders have been able to acknowledge that peace is the speediest and best way to settle these conflicts. My country has worked very hard at all levels, particularly at the leadership and ministerial levels, to find settlements to the conflicts in that region. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has joined in many international and regional efforts to that end. As an example, I would cite the donor conference that took place in Freetown under United Nations auspices at the beginning of 2002, as well as our participation in the joint initiative to rebuild Sierra Leone, which was launched in Tripoli in February 2002, and which led to the establishment of a joint fund for the reconstruction of Sierra Leone in the amount of $24 million. Another example is the 2002 campaign to destroy small arms and light weapons in Sierra Leone. These are very significant examples of our resolve to put an end to these conflicts.

With the cooperation and coordination of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations efforts have led to the establishment of peacekeeping and security operations in a number of West African countries.

We are optimistic about the political future of these countries, in particular in terms of the gradual transition from war and conflict to peacebuilding, reconstruction and stability. In that regard, we thank the Secretary-General for attaching such importance to the problems besetting the African continent, West Africa in particular. We share the concerns expressed today by the Secretary-General in his statement to the Council, in particular the weakness of good governance arrangements, which prevents these countries from benefiting properly from their natural resources. Yet, we see efforts being made on a daily basis to promote peace and security, notwithstanding the problems to which the Secretary-General has drawn attention. In our view, we can achieve lasting peace and security by building and promoting national institutions, particularly in areas such as security, democracy-building, the rule of law, human rights, the resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, transparency in the establishment of better conflict management and settlement mechanisms and enhanced early warning systems designed to address conflict before it erupts. It can also be achieved by dealing with problems such as poverty and unemployment, which lead to the recruitment of young people into armed forces. International efforts should be stepped up to mobilize resources and financial and technical assistance that could make it possible to build peace, stability and sustainable development. This requires efforts by all States and regional and international institutions in order to ensure success.

In conclusion, I assure the Council that we are ready to contribute positively to efforts to establish lasting peace and security, not just in West Africa but throughout Africa, because bolstering peace and security in the continent is at the top of Libya's foreign policy priorities.

Mr. President, we thank you for convening this important meeting and wish the Council every success in the debate.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Sierra Leone, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): Mr. President, my delegation would like to join others in welcoming you to New York to chair this debate on the consolidation

of peace in West Africa, which is still one of the most volatile regions in the world in terms of peace and security. We regret that, due to unavoidable circumstances, my Foreign Minister was unable to attend and participate in this important meeting.

We note that virtually all the speakers in this debate have made reference to my country, Sierra Leone, including, just a few minutes ago, my colleagues, the Permanent Representative of India and the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We thank those who acknowledged the progress that we have made in becoming, perhaps, a model in post-conflict recovery.

Due to time constraints, I will try to summarize my statement.

Peacekeeping is an essential element, but not the only one in the process of creating the conditions for lasting peace in West Africa. Peacekeeping, in our view, must be undertaken in conjunction with peacebuilding, which has become synonymous with the consolidation of peace. In our view, the benefits of peacekeeping will be lost unless peacekeeping is accompanied by a comprehensive programme of measures for peace consolidation. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission, to which delegations have referred today, marks an acknowledgement of the necessity to build on the solid foundation laid by its peacekeepers, particularly those of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). We are grateful that Sierra Leone is one of the two post-conflict countries on the agenda of the Commission, and we hope that our sister republics of Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, which are also recovering from devastating armed conflict, will also be considered by the Commission in the not-too-distant future.

This morning, we heard several views on what constitutes the consolidation of peace. In our view, peace consolidation should not be seen merely as an effort to ensure that our countries do not slide back into conflict. The primary objective of the consolidation of peace, in our view, should be to attain sustainable development. This involves the mobilization of resources for economic and social reconstruction, including, of course, repairing the infrastructural and institutional damage resulting from conflict. The consolidation of peace, in our view, is a development exercise, one which must be seen and addressed in the context of our poverty alleviation programmes in the subregion.

We consider ECOWAS to be an important and effective instrument for the consolidation of peace as well as for peacekeeping in the subregion. In spite of its limited logistical and other resources, ECOWAS, through its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has already demonstrated its capacity to help keep the peace. Who can forget, for instance, the important role that ECOMOG played in Sierra Leone before the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces? We note also that the Security Council itself commended ECOMOG and ECOWAS for what they had done. It also took an unprecedented decision under Chapter VIII of the Charter to authorize ECOWAS to enforce an arms embargo against the rebel junta in Sierra Leone in 1997.

ECOWAS needs the support of the United Nations and the international community to fulfil its primary objectives of economic cooperation and integration aimed at ensuring sustainable development in its member States. We appeal to the United Nations and the international community to strengthen their relations with ECOWAS and its specialized agencies and programmes.

While it is the responsibility of each State in the subregion, including ours, to devise and implement policies and programmes aimed at the consolidation of peace and sustainable development, we strongly believe that the United Nations and the international community could make a tremendous contribution to our efforts by, first, mobilizing resources, as a matter of urgency, in support of the reconstruction and long-term development programmes of the countries of the subregion, most of which, including Sierra Leone, are among the least developed in the world; recognizing and responding to the linkage between the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and the maintenance and consolidation of peace; and recognizing the linkage between the consolidation of peace and the implementation of agreed guidelines and commitments in international trade and financing for development, including debt relief.

As we have witnessed, conflicts in the West African subregion have been exacerbated by cross-border movements of illegal small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, as well as of mercenaries. Many speakers, including my colleague

from Senegal, have referred to this today. Indeed, the hard-won peace in countries such as Sierra Leone is threatened by increasing flows of these weapons. The United Nations and the international community can contribute effectively to the consolidation of peace in the ECOWAS subregion also by intensifying efforts to eradicate the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, which have devastated the human and physical resources of the subregion.

I think it is a shame that the recent United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects collapsed last month. We were also disappointed that following its recent debate on small arms (see S/PV.5390), the Security Council did not adopt any resolution on the issue. Those facts do not augur well for the consolidation of peace in the ECOWAS subregion, which is awash with those illegal and deadly weapons. However, we trust that there will be a change of attitude when the matter is brought before the Council again.

Meanwhile, we look forward to the adoption of the draft presidential statement that will be issued at the close of this meeting.

The President: I thank the representative of Sierra Leone and the previous speaker for their respect for the four-minute rule.

The next speaker is the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Chaderton Matos (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council. Your country, Ghana, has been a pioneer in the history of liberation and the consolidation of Africa as a region of free States.

Our commitment to international social justice and our sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters of West Africa prompt us to support initiatives and programmes to enhance cooperation within the United Nations system, not only to eliminate real or potential causes of war but also to consolidate peace in the region: peace that will generate freedom, growth and justice — and vice versa, in a virtuous circle.

Lasting peace and sustainable development are complementary and mutually inclusive terms. In its process of historic democratic institutional and social change, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has deepened and broadened its relations with Africa based on a foreign policy that draws upon our African roots to develop a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. For us, rhetoric has been outpaced by events. In recent years, President Hugo Chávez and other high Venezuelan officials have frequently visited Africa. Thus far, we have more than doubled the number of Venezuelan embassies in the continent; we have created a unit within our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, headed by a Deputy Minister, dealing exclusively with that friendly and fraternal continent. This ideological, political and spiritual commitment was highlighted by the participation of our head of State in the African Union (AU) summit held at Bajul.

We have moved forward in applying the principles of solidarity and complementarity through tangible, productive actions such as the signing of cooperation agreements with Benin, the Gambia, Libya, Mali and the Sudan, as well through measures in support of specific programmes in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. We have worked with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, to support the efforts of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Togo. Further examples include our support for the programme for woman and young people in the Sahelian region; agreements on energy cooperation with Mali and Senegal; and tripartite education and health projects among Venezuela, Cuba and Africa, which are to be put in place by the end of this year. In Venezuela, we have established institutions such as the following: African Friendship House, created in an area with a large population of African descent; a regional study centre for African historical heritage; and an educational cooperation programme with Mali, which is open to grant-holders from that country. That is the practical, peaceful way in which we contribute to international peace and security.

Extreme poverty is the greatest threat to peace. Half of the world's population survives on less than two dollars a day, and some 1.2 billion people live on barely one dollar. That is both a potential and a real source of political destabilization and social disintegration. Hunger and the lack of health care and

education trigger violence which the most powerful have come to meet with the ultimate response of further violence: war.

We believe that, last year, we lost an important opportunity to reverse those trends when we failed to address the economic and social elements of the Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit. The Bolivarian Government of Venezuela is looking to the South for new responses to old questions that we have sought to resolve, questions imposed from the North. At present, we are developing projects such as Televisora del Sur (TeleSUR) to provide free and accurate information that will show the other side of the coin, as well as projects such as the Banco del Sur, the Universidad del Sur and Petrosur: areas in which African nations can work together with us.

We are focusing priority attention on education, which is a basic tool for the liberation of peoples. UNESCO has verified that Venezuela is now free of illiteracy. Now, we are freer, and we want to share our experiences.

We must support the countries of West Africa in their democratic progress towards peace, respect for human rights and development. That requires continued commitment on the part of the international community. We encounter specific problems in West Africa, including poverty, famine, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the role of women, the reintegration of child soldiers and the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Those issues need to be addressed together with the development of political democracy. We support the initiatives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), launched by the African Union in 2001, which addressed the primary responsibilities of the peoples and Governments of Africa in defining their economic growth and their sustainable development.

My country hopes that the General Assembly will be able to establish machinery, whereby nations that make contributions to promoting the development of African countries can present voluntary reports concerning their achievements. Venezuela reaffirms its concern for the well-being of our brothers and sisters, the peoples of Africa, which will only be possible if their most pressing needs are met in the framework of complete freedom and the full enjoyment of human rights.

At the same time, it is essential for the international community to give all the support requested in order to ensure that African nations have direct control over their political and economic processes, in keeping with the principle of the self-determination of peoples.

The United Nations Charter was crafted in order to ensure respect and enjoyment of such principles and to pave the way to peace, not to allow war to prevail.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): For years, West Africa has been riven with violent internal conflicts. Recently, however, the political instability that has afflicted the region for so long has, for the most part subsided, and peace processes have been making steady progress.

In Liberia, under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, laudable progress is being made in rebuilding the country. Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau have likewise transitioned from war to constitutional Government. And in Côte d'Ivoire, the peace roadmap established by the International Working Group is in place, and all Ivorian parties reached an agreement in Yamoussoukro last month on significant commitments for peace.

Despite those positive political developments, the region still faces daunting challenges, including massive cross-border refugee flows, slow economic growth, low inflows of foreign direct investment, heavy debt burdens and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Achieving lasting peace and security in the region will take considerable effort.

I would like to stress three steps that are, in our view, vital to the consolidation of peace in the region: first, taking a regional approach; secondly, focusing on the peacebuilding process and thirdly, addressing the root causes of conflicts.

First, my delegation believes that peace consolidation in West Africa needs to be pursued on a regional basis. The peoples and countries in the region are closely interlinked, which means that ensuring peace and security in one country necessitates close cooperation with its neighbours. This regional approach can best be carried out through regional organizations. In that regard, we appreciate and support the continuing role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in maintaining peace and security in the region, both through its own

initiatives and in collaboration with the United Nations.

Secondly, peace and security in West Africa requires a focus, not just on peacemaking and peacekeeping, but also on peacebuilding efforts. As the Secretary-General aptly put it, security in the region is stable but fragile. The first post-conflict years are the most dangerous, as wounded societies walk the tightrope from chaos and violence to sustainable peace and stability. If West Africa is to avoid falling into the abyss of renewed conflict, it will need support for new institutions, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts and economic recovery, among others. In that regard, we believe that the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in providing guidance and in coordinating the efforts of the Security Council, ECOWAS and other regional and United Nations bodies that will be engaged in the region.

Thirdly, to prevent new crises and the recurrence of conflict, it is important to address the root causes of instability in West Africa. Regional, ethnic and socioeconomic tensions in the region have been immensely destructive to infrastructure, caused mass migrations of refugees and have led to the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of combatants rather than societies. To prevent renewed conflict, long-term economic and social development strategies need to be formulated and implemented with the assistance of the international community. Sustained attention and commitment by the international community will be crucial.

The Republic of Korea has actively participated in international efforts to help the development of African countries. The plan to double our official development assistance by 2009 is part of our commitment to assist African development. We hope that the era of West African conflict will be followed by an era of peace, prosperity and renewal.

The President: I now call on the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): First of all, I want to thank you, Sir, and members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to address the Council on peace consolidation in West Africa. This is an issue that is of critical importance, not only to my country and the subregion, but also to the entire African continent.

I also wish to congratulate Ghana, a close and brotherly country from our subregion, for presiding over the affairs of the Council during the month of August, and on a day when the issue of peace consolidation in West Africa is being discussed. I feel particularly happy to observe that you, Honourable Minister, are personally chairing this meeting and wish you a pleasant visit in New York.

I seize this opportunity, too, to express Nigeria's gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing interest and tireless efforts towards the resolution of conflicts and consolidation of peace in our subregion.

Until recently, West Africa had the unenviable record of being an unstable subregion in Africa. It was threatened by a series of conflicts, the longest being the conflict in Liberia. I am happy to note that the record is gradually being reversed with the recent election of democratic Governments in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea Bissau. Those gains were possible through the efforts of our leaders, who had resolved that the subregion could no longer continue to be the theatre of unending fratricidal wars. In that connection, the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been exemplary and highly commendable. In addition, the understanding and cooperation of the leaders of the African Union and of this body contributed in no small measure to the growing peace in our subregion.

I must also point out that the handing over of former President Charles Taylor to the Special Court in Sierra Leone greatly contributed to the easing of tension and opened a new chapter for the consolidation of peace and security in our subregion. Mr. Taylor's arrest and subsequent transfer to the International Criminal Court in The Hague served as a strong message to both present and future actors on the West African scene that it is no longer business as usual. It further encouraged our partners that hope is not lost for transforming the subregion into a region of peace, progress and economic prosperity.

In spite of those gains, however, the challenges of peace consolidation in our subregion are enormous. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire remains of serious concern to us. The possible spillover effects of the Ivorian conflict cannot be overstated. Furthermore, peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau remains fragile. The Governments of those countries

have to contend daily with the threat of relapsing into crisis because of the daunting challenges they have to contend with.

We cannot, therefore, consolidate peace in West Africa without addressing some urgent issues. First, the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons deserves greater and urgent attention. The unrestrained access to those weapons by individuals and groups is, without doubt, a major threat to peace. Those weapons have proved to be a great disincentive to non-State actors to follow the path of peace through negotiations. On our own, we are constrained as members of ECOWAS and the African Union from effectively countering the consequences of the proliferation of those weapons.

Secondly, the opportunities for economic growth and development need to be enhanced. Like most developing countries, the countries of our subregion are saddled not only with the visible consequences of conflicts, human rights abuses and poor governance, but also with the state of our economies. That has worsened the level of poverty and unemployment among our youth. The spectre of youth unemployment and its potential negative impact on our social fabric, peace, stability and security are indicative of the scope of the challenges facing the subregion.

Finally, the question of capacity-building and institutional support requires no less urgent attention. The countries of our region, particularly those emerging from conflict, require urgent support to build and strengthen their institutions of governance, dispensation of justice, protection of human rights, and promotion of health and educational services. It is in that regard that we consider the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and its ongoing work as a genuine contribution to peace consolidation in our subregion and look forward to the early translation of the Commission's work into concrete action in Sierra Leone.

It is therefore our hope that this debate will strengthen the resolve of the international community, including that of this body, to take concrete steps towards further assisting the countries of our subregion and removing the obstacles to a durable and sustainable peace in West Africa.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Norway, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. Enge (Norway): The Norwegian Government very much appreciates your initiative, Sir, in convening this open debate in the Security Council on peace consolidation in West Africa. We are pleased to see that West Africa has made considerable progress on peace and security in recent years.

In Liberia, Africa's first female president and her Government have taken decisive and courageous steps towards reconstruction and recovery. We commend Liberia for requesting that former President Charles Taylor be turned over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. A society ravaged by war cannot be healed unless those responsible for crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law are held responsible. Sierra Leone's request to be included on the agenda of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is also important. It can help speed up the process of reconstruction and recovery in preparation for the 2007 elections.

Those achievements are commendable, but fragile. Many West African countries face enormous challenges, such as in Côte d'Ivoire, where the precarious situation continues to threaten the stability of the region. The international community must continue its support for consolidating peace in West Africa. Broad, consistent and long-term assistance to regional organizations is crucial. It is in our common interest to provide financial support for Governments that struggle to enhance security, promote national reconciliation and build peace in their societies.

The Norwegian Government will increase its support for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in West Africa. Norway has provided post-conflict support to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. This year, Norway plans to provide approximately $27.5 million for humanitarian relief, peacebuilding and reconstruction activities in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Norway has over the years given priority to development assistance to African nations. We also support efforts by African Governments and work closely with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other regional organizations in Africa. Their leadership is crucial in building capacity for stronger engagement in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace operations and peacebuilding on the African continent.

Allow me to highlight a few of the issues raised in the comprehensive concept paper put forward by the Government of Ghana.

It is important to support efforts for more regional cooperation. It is also crucial to address cross-border issues that could fuel conflicts and increase tensions. We would welcome the early ratification and implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms as a key to progress here. The progress achieved by ECOWAS in developing a regional standby force for peace operations is impressive. In particular, the Norwegian Government would like to commend ECOWAS for taking the lead in developing the civilian components of the African Standby Force, including humanitarian capacity.

As part of our long-standing cooperation with African partners under the Training for Peace programme, Norway has worked with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Institute to assist ECOWAS in developing West African civilian capacity for peacekeeping operations. The use by ECOWAS of its Peace Fund for programmes of cooperation in conflict-prone border areas deserves active international support. Norway is about to enter into an agreement with ECOWAS to provide financial assistance to the ECOWAS Peace Fund and to the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme.

The importance of the transparent and accountable management of natural resources and the establishment of oversight bodies needs to be emphasized. Several countries in West Africa have endorsed the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and are on their way to implement the EITI principles. That is a key contribution to build lasting peace and stability. We encourage and support further EITI implementation efforts in West Africa and look forward to broad West African participation at the third plenary EITI conference, which is scheduled to take place in Oslo, Norway, on 16 and 17 October this year.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We congratulate Ghana on its assumption of the Council presidency for this month. We are confident, Sir, that, under your country's leadership, the Council will find its way to silencing the guns in the Middle East and elsewhere. May I also felicitate Ambassador De la Sablière and the French delegation on last month's intense and important presidency of the Council.

We welcome your presence here, Sir, to preside over this important meeting of the Security Council. We also welcome the participation of other dignitaries in this meeting.

Africa, afflicted for years by conflict, disease and poverty, justifiably occupies a significant segment of the Security Council's work. Today's discussion is relevant and timely, especially in the context of significant strides that have been made in recent years for peace and stability in West Africa. Sadly, that is not the case when it comes to some other situations around the world, such as in the Middle East.

Sierra Leone is a United Nations peacekeeping success story. It is now engaged in peace consolidation. We trust that the Peacebuilding Commission will reinforce this process.

Liberia is on the road to recovery and stability from the horrors of the cruel conflict and crimes we witnessed three years ago. Liberia and its leadership deserve the full support of the Council and the world community in sustaining stability, reviving its economy and respecting human rights.

We hope to see similar progress in Côte d'Ivoire. That would enable this important African country to serve once again as the economic hub of West Africa.

Pakistan enjoys friendly and fraternal relations with the countries of West Africa. We have made our modest contributions to the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in West Africa. Pakistan takes pride in its participation in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). We now look forward to contributing to Sierra Leone's reconstruction through our membership in the Peacebuilding Commission. Our troops are serving in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in support of peace in that country. We are also participating in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

During this meeting, our African brothers have expressed their perspectives and priorities regarding the problems of West Africa. The Security Council should heed their voices. Indeed, the important issues outlined in the presidency's non-paper for this debate, have been the subject of frequent discussions in the work of the Council.

During Pakistan's tenure on the Security Council, we were able to acquire a greater understanding of the situation in West Africa. In May 2004, Pakistan, as Council President, organized a public meeting on complex crises and the United Nations response. A summary of the important ideas and suggestions advanced in that debate was circulated as document S/2004/723 and may be worth revisiting.

Most of the situations in Africa are complex crises. They require a combination of actions — conflict prevention and resolution to begin with, and, later, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. In view of the linkage between security and development, the newly established Peacebuilding Commission will, we hope, be able to focus on the multifaceted aspects of recovery and peacebuilding in country-specific situations. Pakistan will contribute actively to its work.

Despite the progress achieved in West Africa, considerable work remains to be accomplished, especially in addressing the root causes of conflicts. What we have often referred to as the "politics of poverty and scarcity" characterizes most of these internal conflicts. The politics of scarcity and poverty must be ended. In this context, greater political will is required to break the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the illegal trade of arms, which so often spark and sustain the conflicts in Africa. More attention must still be given to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) and to security sector reform. And it is clear that laying the foundation for sustainable development will require, apart from direct international assistance and debt relief, better terms of trade, larger trade capacity and greater trade access.

A heartening feature of the West African developments is the regional approach being adopted to address its problems, especially cross-cutting issues — small arms, mercenaries, refugees, migrants, et cetera. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has proved itself a competent and reliable partner for peace in this region. Its leadership merits acclaim. Pakistan fully supports your call, Mr. President, and that of Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas, to address the capacity and resource constraints of ECOWAS.

A comprehensive regional approach could also open greater possibilities for the resolution of security, peacebuilding and development challenges in other parts of the world that are today riven by rampant war, occupation and destruction.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and, again, for his respect of the four minute rule. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Niger, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Abani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like in taking the floor to convey to you the congratulations of the delegation of Niger on the work that has been so ably accomplished under the Ghanaian presidency of this body, work that I am sure will ultimately lead us to concrete results at a time when several equally crucial challenges face us, challenges which it is your daunting but very inspiring task, Mr. President, to manage throughout this month of August.

I should also like to say, Mr. President, that the delegation of Niger is pleased about the theme that you chose for this open debate and for good reason. Peace consolidation is indeed a challenge to our subregion because our capacity to consolidate peace in our subregion will determine the fate of all of our initiatives. The regional economic programme, where we enjoy a partnership with institutions and friendly countries, can only be successful if we create an environment where peace, security, good governance, human rights, combating corruption, protecting the environment, education and health are solidly established.

The question of peace and security in West Africa was soon seen as being one of the major problems facing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which immediately proceeded to strengthen its legal arsenal by adopting instruments that would help to resolve those problems.

Today, just looking at West Africa alone, we note a significant improvement in the peace and security situation in the subregion. Liberia has just achieved an outstanding success with its presidential elections, with the crucial assumption of power by the first woman at the head of an African State. Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau are now gradually building a newly refound peace, and their situation deserves more than ever to benefit from the support of the international community, in particular, that of the new Peacebuilding Commission, in their efforts to build stable nations with a focus on national rebuilding. Côte d'Ivoire,

likewise, enjoys the support and assistance of the international community, and it deserves the continued unwavering support of the international community for the efforts it is making.

I should also say, Mr. President, that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, nor is the absence of conflict synonymous with peace. Indeed, situations such as food insecurity and endemic poverty in some of the countries of the West African subregion often lead to the displacement of persons and to irredentist movements, and can thus threaten peace, just as the burden of debt and institutional deficiencies can also constitute similar dangers to peace and jeopardize the development of the West African subregion.

As I said before, Mr. President, your choice of this theme was, for us, a very wise one, because here in the United Nations these same concerns are still with us, as shown in the fact that the World Summit Outcome called upon all of us to establish the Peacebuilding Commission, a body which, unlike the plenary summit recommendations, enjoyed the active support of a rather broad consensus, which meant that it could be established in a relatively short period of time.

Now that we have this mechanism, which should help us to consolidate peace by assisting countries that are emerging from conflict, it is essential that the new institution fully play its role. It is also essential that we think about how to make that body as effective as possible.

In that regard, it is essential that the countries concerned first proceed to build up the capacity of their national institutions. Here, one of the problems facing West African countries is the absence of — or insufficient access to — justice, because judges are overburdened. This results in delays in the administration of justice. Similarly, when it comes to controlling and punishing criminal activities, deficiencies are resulting in breaches of the peace and a breakdown of security in our countries.

The circulation of small arms and light weapons has led to the emergence of warlords, who have taken advantage of institutional weaknesses within States to establish their rule, which is based on chaos and desolation.

My delegation once again congratulates the heads of State of the subregion, who have transformed their Moratorium into a legally binding Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. The national control commissions responsible for the collection of small arms and light weapons which have been set up in most ECOWAS countries should be congratulated, because they have spearheaded the work that has led to the major normative progress that has been made in West African countries aimed at combating the illicit traffic in small arms.

My delegation also believes that the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance is an irreplaceable instrument that should be welcomed, since it has facilitated increased mobilization by countries of the subregion in situations where peace is threatened, particularly during unconstitutional changes of power. That ambitious Protocol on Good Governance provides for concrete actions, not least against countries that are conspicuously lacking when it comes to good governance. It is an instrument that should be kept strong in the interests of peace consolidation in West Africa. That instrument, which, when it was adopted, was considered revolutionary, is today a tool that should be promoted and disseminated, because it has deterrent potential when it comes to preserving good governance.

Another important mechanism that West Africa must make its own in the interests of peace consolidation is the African Peer Review Mechanism, which was initiated within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. That innovative mechanism is a kind of reward for good governance and peace at the regional and international levels, and its impact can only strengthen African Governments and their peoples in their nation-building efforts, which, as we know, can be fruitful only in a climate of peace and security.

Accordingly, the countries of the West African subregion are, in the main, participating in economic reform programmes in the context of bilateral and multilateral partnerships. While we appreciate the crucial contribution of those partners, in terms of both support for the economy and multifaceted efforts to combat poverty, such partnerships must give top priority to national ownership of policies and programmes by the countries concerned. It is also true that the search for effective partnerships — when these have a strictly economic orientation — could upset the fragile balance of peace and security, particularly in the

poorest countries. For example, we know that social unrest can be caused by a sudden sharp increase in certain taxes or in the price of essential goods. While that might seem normal in some situations, in other cases it could jeopardize peace and security.

My point is that, in countries where everything is fragile, peace too is inevitably precarious, and that the particular situation of each area must be taken into account. Countries emerging from conflict should therefore be given the special attention that they deserve within the Peacebuilding Commission.

In this regard, the approach taken by the Commission — to consider all the aspects of the work that needs to be done to help countries to consolidate peace by providing for the participation of financial institutions — is extremely important. The Commission must, however, fully implement the existing cooperation frameworks between West Africa and the African Union on the one hand, and West Africa and the United Nations on the other. That global partnership for peace is already quite prominent in the fundamental ECOWAS texts, and, as has been rightly noted by the United Nations, which provides for active involvement by the regional economic communities in peace consolidation, that should be emphasized and further refined.

Those are my delegation's comments on this extremely important topic that you, Sir, wisely chose for discussion in this body. I would like to conclude by reiterating my delegation's support for the draft presidential statement that you have prepared.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Liberia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Eesiah (Liberia): I should like at the outset to join previous speakers in welcoming you, Sir, as you preside over this meeting, attended by foreign ministers of the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). I bring you greetings and felicitations from Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and from the Government and the people of Liberia, and I congratulate you on my own account. Let me also take this opportunity to thank you for having convened this Security Council open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa.

His Excellency Ambassador George W. Wallace, Foreign Minister of Liberia, would have very much loved to participate in these deliberations, but, owing to current developments in Liberia, he was not able to be here.

Liberia, which has experienced more than 14 years of civil war, welcomes this open debate aimed at finding equitable solutions to the many problems affecting the West African subregion. We know too well the magnitude of these problems and the devastating effect they have on the youth of our country. The conflicts have not only killed thousands of our people, but have also brought about economic deprivation and political instability in the subregion.

There is no doubt that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union, the United States of America, the United Nations, the international community and non-governmental organizations, as well as peace-loving countries, made tremendous sacrifices to bring about peace in Liberia, thereby successfully resolving years of civil war, which left the country devastated and in total ruins.

It is the view of my delegation that Liberia is ready to support and implement the draft presidential statement to be adopted later in this ministerial-level meeting, aimed at promoting sustainable economic development and putting in place a viable mechanism and measures to stop the cross-border recruitment of child soldiers in the subregion.

The Liberian delegation believes that that cross-border recruitment is one of the most serious problems affecting our region, and every effort must be made to put an end to it immediately.

The Liberian delegation is, therefore, appealing to you, Mr. President, and to this ministerial meeting to make it an extreme priority to implement the decision of this meeting in order to stop the importation of weapons into the subregion, which has robbed it of its young people.

My delegation would like to pay special tribute to the Mano River Union, ECOWAS and the African Union for their tireless efforts to help bring about the peace that Liberia is enjoying today. We request those organizations to consolidate that hard-won peace by encouraging and promoting economic and employment opportunities for the people of the subregion.

The President: I thank the representative of Liberia for respecting our rule.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, to respond briefly to comments made.

Mr. Ould-Abdallah (*spoke in French*): I should like to make only four points.

I think it is extremely important to insist once again that the unemployment among young people in West Africa poses a great threat to the stability of countries, as a number of speakers have said. It is also a threat to the bilateral relations between the region and its closest neighbours, particularly in Western Europe. In all of these countries, the immigration of young people is also an issue.

Secondly, the Security Council should discuss how to find the best way to support the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in 2007 in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. It is a period of tension — tension that must be prevented.

Thirdly, there are democratic countries such as yours, Mr. President — stable countries such as Mali and Niger, which at the same time are fragile countries exposed to drought and other unpredictable events. They respect the law and the rights of their citizens. How can we help them to strengthen their capacities?

My last point is that African public opinion is better informed. Today, I circulated a little radio that cost $1, bought in Africa — a radio that all Africans can buy. My generation could not buy one for less than $50. Therefore, Security Council debates are followed closely by all African countries in crisis, thanks to FM radio, so we must be increasingly mindful of public opinion in Africa, particularly West Africa. It is aware of the messages that the Council can send it.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah for his comments and, once again, for his gift.

After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council, recalling its relevant resolutions and the statements of its President, stresses the importance of addressing the issue of peace consolidation in West Africa in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. It recognizes the need for such an approach for durable solutions to the conflicts in West A and to explore ways and means to pro sustainable peace, security and development.
>
> "The Security Council welcomes transition from war to democratic rule in S Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia, as wel current efforts aimed at implementing meas leading to free and fair elections in Côte d'Iv It also notes that the security situation in t countries remains generally stable but fragile.
>
> "The Security Council stresses the nee build the capacity of national institutions address the root causes of conflict as an esse part of peace consolidation, especially in areas of political and economic governance well as the rule of law and the fight aga impunity.
>
> "The Security Council recalls the meas it has implemented on the illegal exploitatio natural resources in the region and encoura member States of the Economic Community West African States (ECOWAS) to pro transparent and sustainable exploitation of s resources.
>
> "The Security Council stresses the prim role of each West African Government in pe consolidation for the benefit of all citizens reiterates the importance of all leaders work together for peace and security in the region.
>
> "The Security Council considers that ill trafficking in small arms and light weapons s poses a threat to peace and security in the reg In this connection, it welcomes the decision ECOWAS member States to transform Moratorium on the Import, Export Manufacture of Light weapons into a bind Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapo Their Ammunition and Other Related Materi It further urges all States, both within and outs the region, to ensure compliance with its exist arms embargoes in West Africa and for Sta within ECOWAS to ratify the Convention as so as possible to enable it to come into eff promptly.
>
> "The Security Council considers that ci society, including women's organizations, has role to play in supporting peace consolidati

initiatives in the region and that their efforts in this regard deserve to be supported as appropriate.

"The Security Council underlines the crucial importance of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, taking into account the special needs of child soldiers and women, and encourages the international community to work in close partnership with the countries concerned. It further affirms the need to find lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in order to prevent the recruitment of such youth by illegal armed groups.

"The Security Council considers reform of the security sector an essential element for sustainable peace and stability in West Africa and urgently calls on the donor community and the international financial institutions to coordinate their efforts to support the States concerned.

"The Security Council stresses the continued need for assisting West African States and ECOWAS to curb illicit cross-border activities.

"The Security Council reiterates the importance of finding effective solutions to the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region and urges the States in the region, in collaboration with relevant international organizations and donor countries, to create the necessary conditions for their voluntary and safe return.

"The Security Council welcomes the positive role played by the international community and civil society in addressing the humanitarian situation in many parts of the region and urges them to provide adequate resources as part of a coordinated humanitarian response strategy to improve the human security of the people of West Africa in need of such protection.

"The Security Council stresses the need to ensure improved coordination of donor initiatives in order to make the best use of available resources, as well as encourages donor partners to redeem their pledges in a timely manner.

"The Security Council further stresses the need for continued and enhanced cooperation between the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union in peace consolidation initiatives, based on an integrated approach and with the aim of maximizing the use of available resources.

In this connection, it commends the role of the United Nations Office in West Africa, as well as other United Nations offices, missions and agencies in the region in facilitating, in close cooperation with the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and its member States, the achievement of peace and security priorities of the region. It further encourages the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the United Nations missions in the region to continue their efforts in coordinating United Nations activities to ensure their improved cohesion and maximum efficiency.

"The Security Council underscores the importance and the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in assisting countries emerging from conflict to achieve sustainable peace and stability.

"The Security Council emphasizes the regional dimension of peace and security in West Africa and requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the ECOWAS secretariat, to submit to it by the end of the year a report with recommendations on the cooperation between the United Nations missions deployed in the region and on the cross-border issues in West Africa."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/38.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5510

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5510th meeting

Thursday, 10 August 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Nana Effah-Apenteng	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Okio
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Gallardo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bye
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Letter dated 1 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/601)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-46179 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Letter dated 1 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/601)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/601, which contains the text of a letter dated 1 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Council.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2006/629, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I should like to draw the attention of members to document S/2006/609, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 August 2006 from the representative of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, China, Congo, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1700 (2006).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5511

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5511th meeting

Friday, 11 August 2006, 6.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Nana Akufo-Addo	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Moeller
	France	Mr. Douste-Blazy
	Greece	Ms. Bakoyannis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Pereyra Plasencia
	Qatar	Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mrs. Beckett
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-46491 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 7.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: I should like to acknowledge the presence at the Council table of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, His Excellency Mr. Per Stig Moeller; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Her Excellency Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis; the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani; the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Her Excellency Mrs. Margaret Beckett, M.P.; and the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Her Excellency Ms. Condoleezza Rice.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to all of them.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Israel and Lebanon, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Gillerman (Israel) and Mr. Mitri (Lebanon) took seats at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/640, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of the members to documents S/2006/571, S/2006/578, S/2006/599, S/2006/621, S/2006/625, S/2006/630 and S/2006/639, containing the text of letters dated 24, 26 and 31 July, and 4, 7, 9 and 11 August 2006, respectively, from Lebanon addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I also wish to draw the attention of members of the Council to documents S/2006/595 and S/2006/626, containing the text of letters dated 29 July and 7 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, as well as document S/2006/593, containing the note by the Secretary-General dated 28 July 2006.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I welcome wholeheartedly the draft resolution the Council is about to adopt and I am greatly relieved that it provides for a full and immediate cessation of hostilities. It is absolutely vital that the fighting now stop. Provided it does, I believe that this draft resolution will make it possible to conclude a sustainable and lasting ceasefire agreement in the days ahead, and I hope that this could be the beginning of a process to solve the underlying political problems in the region through peaceful means.

But I would be remiss if I did not tell members how profoundly disappointed I am that the Council did not reach this point much, much earlier, and I am convinced that my disappointment and sense of frustration are shared by hundreds of millions of people around the world. For weeks now, I and many others have been calling repeatedly for an immediate cessation of hostilities, for the sake of the civilian population on both sides who have suffered such terrible, unnecessary pain and loss. All members of the Council must be aware that this inability to act sooner has badly shaken the world's faith in its authority and integrity.

Since 12 July, when Hizbollah launched an unprovoked attack on Israel, killing eight Israeli soldiers and kidnapping two, both Lebanon and Israel have been thrown back into the turmoil of war, death and destruction.

According to the Lebanese Government, over 1,000 Lebanese have been killed and over 3,600 injured. Around a quarter of all of Lebanon's inhabitants, close to a million people, have been displaced. Too many of the victims have been children. In fact, more children than fighters have died in this

conflict. Israeli bombing has turned thousands of homes to rubble. It has also destroyed dozens of bridges and roads, with the result that more than 100,000 people cannot reach safety, nor can relief supplies reach them. Such devastation would be tragic at any time. That it has been inflicted on Lebanon's people just when they were beginning to make real progress towards political reform and economic recovery makes it all the more so.

Israelis, for their part, have been newly awakened to a threat which they had hoped, with good reason, to have escaped when — as the Council certified on my recommendation — they withdrew from Lebanon six years ago. Some 41 Israeli civilians have been killed, and hundreds of thousands have had their lives disrupted — being forced into shelters or to flee their homes — by rocket attacks from Hizbollah, which has launched its fire indiscriminately, to sow the widest possible terror, making no effort to distinguish between civilian and military targets and also endangering civilians on its own side by firing from the midst of heavily populated areas.

Nor has the damage been limited to Lebanon and Israel. A region that could ill afford another chapter of violence and another source of instability has been inflamed further still. Extremists have been given new ammunition. The United Nations itself has been a target of protest and violence, despite the Organization's humanitarian efforts, including those of our valiant peacekeepers in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), to reach people trapped in the crossfire. UNIFIL has had to cope with a situation for which it was neither mandated nor equipped.

I am full of pride and admiration for the courageous men and women who serve under the United Nations flag, and indeed for all the humanitarian workers; they have shown incredible courage since 12 July in carrying out their duties in the midst of intense fighting, which has injured 16 United Nations personnel and, tragically, caused the deaths of five others.

Indeed, UNIFIL's tenacity has made possible the diplomatic solution that you, the members of the Security Council, have just forged. Without it, you would have had to face the difficult prospect of UNIFIL's withdrawal. Indeed, you may yet have to face it in the hours and days ahead if the immediate cessation of hostilities called for in the draft resolution does not hold.

So, this draft resolution comes none too soon, and it marks a vital step forward. I am glad that Council members have been able to resolve their differences, accommodating many points of view, and I hope they will adopt this text unanimously. Having done so, they must work with equal determination to make what they have agreed fully effective on the ground.

First of all, humanitarian convoys and relief workers must be given a real guarantee of safe passage and access to those who need help. As soon as the fighting stops, the daunting challenge of helping people to return to their homes safely and rebuild their lives begins.

Secondly, the draft resolution rightly has at its core Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, consistent with Council resolutions 425 (1978), 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006). The international community must give the Lebanese Government all possible support, so that it can make that sovereignty effective. The Government, acting through its regular armed forces and police, must be able to assert its authority throughout the country and on all its borders, particularly to prevent illegal and destabilizing flows of arms. Only when there is one authority, and one gun, will there be a chance of lasting stability. The Lebanese State, like any other sovereign State, must have a monopoly of the use of force on its own territory.

That implies, of course, a full and swift Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory. We now have a clear scenario for achieving that.

The decision of the Lebanese Government to deploy 15,000 of the country's armed forces to the south is a significant development. But, ready and willing as the army may be to undertake this task, the Government itself has acknowledged the need for help. This makes the Council's decision to strengthen the mandate and the numbers of UNIFIL a vital ingredient of the package.

Now, UNIFIL faces a new task, perhaps even more difficult and dangerous than its previous one. It must be robust and effective and ensure that no vacuum is left between the Israeli withdrawal and the deployment of Lebanese forces. Obviously, if it is to carry out this new mandate, it needs to be augmented with the utmost urgency and provided with sophisticated military capabilities. The Council cannot afford to relax for one minute. I urge its members to consult closely, and at once, with both existing and

potential troop contributors, with a view to generating the additional forces needed as quickly as possible, before the situation on the ground once again spins out of control. And I urge the Council to make sure they have the equipment they will need.

I also appeal to all potential donors to respond swiftly to requests from the Lebanese Government for financial help as it struggles to reconstruct its devastated country.

Some may well be reluctant to do so without solid assurances that, this time, peace is here to stay. Such assurances are indeed essential. And they must rest not only on the cessation of hostilities or the deployment of an expanded peace force, but on the resolution of fundamental underlying political problems, including the release of prisoners, starting with those who have been taken hostage, and a resolution of the Sheba'a farms issue in accordance with resolution 1680 (2006).

I will therefore lose no time in taking up the role assigned to me in today's draft resolution. We have just had a terrible lesson in the dangers of allowing problems to fester. We must by now all know that, unless we address unfinished business, it can and will take us unawares.

The Lebanese Government will meet tomorrow, and the Israeli Cabinet on Sunday, to review the resolution. Over the weekend, I will undertake to establish, with both parties, the exact date and time at which the cessation hostilities will come into effect.

Lebanon has been a victim for too long. Mired in an incomplete political transformation since the end of the civil war, it has remained an arena in which both domestic and regional actors could play out their self-interested schemes. Such exploitation of a vulnerable country is shameful. It has undermined the laudable efforts of many Lebanese citizens to consolidate their country as a sovereign, independent and democratic State.

The country and its people deserve better. They deserve the full support of the United Nations in their effort to cast off the chains of external interference and domestic strife. Doing so will require both the establishment of national consensus among Lebanese and constructive cooperation, based on mutual goodwill and sustained dialogue, by all relevant parties and actors at the regional level, including the Governments of Syria and Iran.

Indeed, over the past five weeks we have been reminded yet again what a fragile, tense, crisis-ridden region the Middle East has become — probably now more complex and difficult than ever before. It is now undergoing changes, shifts and realignments on a scale, and of a strategic significance, not seen since the colonial Powers withdrew at the end of the Second World War. Perhaps even more ominous than the physical destruction are the changes in perception that have been occurring, both inside the region and beyond it. The Middle East, which has long figured at the very top of the Council's agenda, is likely to remain there for years to come.

The draft resolution that the Council is about to adopt is only one step towards the comprehensive approach that is needed. Other steps will need to be taken — many others. In order to prevent yet another eruption of violence and bloodshed, the international community must now be prepared to offer sustained support and assistance for the political and economic reconstruction of Lebanon, and also to address the broader context of crisis in the region.

In particular, we must not turn our backs on the bloodshed, suffering and hardship that have continued to afflict Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the West Bank, or the danger from Qassam rockets that continues to threaten the Israeli communities bordering the Gaza Strip. Progress in the Middle East peace process would undoubtedly facilitate the resolution of conflicts elsewhere in the region, and vice versa. Therefore, the various crises in the region must henceforth be addressed not in isolation or bilaterally, but as part of a holistic and comprehensive effort, sanctioned and championed by the Council, to bring peace and stability to the region as a whole.

The parallel crises in Lebanon and Gaza over the past few weeks have demonstrated, once again, that there are no military solutions to this conflict. War is not — I repeat, war is not — the continuation of politics by other means. On the contrary, it represents a catastrophic failure of political skill and imagination — a dethronement of peaceful politics from the primacy which it should enjoy. By taking the first step today towards ending the fighting in Lebanon, the Council is belatedly reasserting that primacy — as the founders of this Organization expected it to do.

Only political solutions will be sustainable in the long term. The peace treaties between Israel and Egypt,

and between Israel and Jordan, are expressions of stable political arrangements and agreements. Through these treaties, the leaders of the countries concerned have courageously brought stability and peace to borders that were previously beset with violence, and thus to their peoples. Ultimately, similar arrangements, based on foundations that are well known to all of us, will have to be put in place along all the borders where there is conflict. Only comprehensive solutions can bring lasting peace.

The United Nations stands for a just solution to all these issues. We stand for security for Lebanon, for Israel and for the region. We stand for a comprehensive solution, and must therefore do our utmost to address all the separate but intertwined issues and conflicts in the region, whether manifest or latent. Delays will only mean more lost lives, more shattered hopes and a further decline in the standing and authority of the Council and the Organization.

We must spare the people of Lebanon, of Israel and of the wider region any further bloodshed — both now and in the months and years ahead.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the vote.

I call on Her Excellency Ms. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I am pleased to join all here today to support this important draft resolution. We have been brought to this day by the good faith and the hard work of many in the international community. I especially want to thank you, Secretary-General Annan. I want to thank French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy for his hard work and for his Government's work, as well as the co-sponsors of the draft resolution. But of course we owe the fullest gratitude to Prime Minister Siniora of Lebanon and his Government and to Prime Minister Olmert of Israel and his Government. These democratic leaders have served their people courageously through this extremely trying and tumultuous time.

With the passage of this draft resolution, the international community will help to open a path to lasting peace between Lebanon and Israel that will end the suffering and the violence of the past month. The status quo that precipitated this conflict was unstable. Since the conflict began, we have sought an immediate end to the fighting. But we have also insisted that a durable ceasefire requires a decisive change from the status quo that produced this war. Today's draft resolution lays the foundation to achieve that goal, for with this draft resolution a new, stronger, Lebanon can emerge, with the world's help. Now the hard and urgent work of implementation begins.

Today's draft resolution accomplishes three important objectives. First, it puts in place a full cessation of hostilities. There is an insistence on an unconditional release of abducted Israeli soldiers. Hizbollah must immediately cease its attacks on Israel, and Israel must halt its offensive military operations in Lebanon, while reserving the right of any sovereign State to defend itself. It is my understanding that the Lebanese Cabinet will vote on Saturday concerning the resolution, and the Government of Israel on Sunday. As the Secretary-General has just noted, he will help the parties to establish a timeline for the implementation of this very important cessation of hostilities.

In addition to respecting the draft resolution's call for a full cessation of hostilities, we believe that all parties should take action to protect civilians, as was called for in the four principles of the 1996 understanding. We urge the Governments of Lebanon and Israel to commit to ending large-scale violence. Hizbollah faces a clear choice between war and peace, and the world should help to ensure that that choice is the right one.

Secondly, this draft resolution will help the democratic Government of Lebanon to expand its sovereign authority, as called for in resolution 1559 (2004). It will do so by creating a new international force that builds on the current United Nations force in Lebanon, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Although it will bear the same name, this will not be the same force; it will be an enhanced UNIFIL. As the Government of Lebanon has requested, this new force will have an expanded mandate, a greater scope of operations, better equipment and much larger numbers — a target of 15,000 soldiers, a sevenfold increase in its current strength.

The Lebanese armed forces, together with the new stabilization force, will deploy to the South of the country to protect the Lebanese people and to ensure that no armed groups like Hizbollah can threaten stability. As that deployment occurs, Israel will

withdraw to behind the Blue Line. Today's draft resolution makes clear that these are parallel processes, and it also calls for the opening of Lebanese harbours and airports, which we expect will be for verifiably civilian purposes.

With the deployment and the withdrawal, a full ceasefire will go into effect. The Council has said that it intends to adopt another draft resolution with further measures to help that ceasefire become permanent. We also look forward to the Secretary-General's proposals to fully implement resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), including the question of disarmament. To further strengthen Lebanon's democracy, the international community will also impose a binding embargo on all weapons heading into that country without the Government's consent. Today, we call upon every State, especially Iran and Syria, to respect the sovereignty of the Lebanese Government and the will of the international community.

Finally, the draft resolution clearly lays out the political principles to secure a lasting peace: no foreign forces, no weapons and no authority in Lebanon other than that of the independent Lebanese Government, which must have complete sovereignty over its entire country. Those principles represent a long-standing international consensus that was first expressed in United Nations resolution 425 (1978), then affirmed in the Taif Accords and reaffirmed in resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006). On 16 July, the Group of Eight leaders endorsed the same political conditions in Saint Petersburg, and 10 days later the Lebanon Core Group supported those principles in the Rome conference.

The draft resolution also offers a way forward to implement resolution 1680 (2006), which addresses the delineation of the Lebanese border, including the Sheba'a farms. We must ensure Israel's security and respect the underlying framework to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with resolution 425 (1978).

Today in no way marks the end of our common efforts. In many respects, the hard work of diplomacy is only just beginning. In many respects, although it is our hope that the draft resolution will lead to the cessation of large-scale hostilities, no one can expect an immediate end to all acts of violence. The conditions of a lasting peace must be nurtured over time, with the good will of the Lebanese and Israeli Governments and with the sustained commitment of the international community that we have undertaken here.

Our most pressing challenge now is to help thousands of displaced people within Lebanon to return to their homes and rebuild their lives. The reconstruction of Lebanon will be led by the Government of Lebanon, but it will demand the generosity of the entire international community. For its part, the United States will continue working with the Governments of Lebanon and Israel to ease the suffering of the Lebanese people. Let me join the Secretary-General in applauding the extraordinary work of humanitarian workers and United Nations workers who, at great risk to themselves, have taken up the cause of suffering people during this turbulent time.

The United States has already committed substantial resources to the humanitarian efforts in Lebanon and Israel. In the critical days and weeks following a cessation of hostilities, we plan to do even more — beginning now — by increasing our immediate assistance to Lebanon to $50 million. The United States will coordinate closely with other major donors, with the international financial institutions and with all who are committed to Lebanon's future. We will also encourage the active involvement of the private sector in Lebanon's reconstruction. Through our common efforts, we must help the people of Lebanon to emerge from this conflict more prosperous and stronger than ever.

The past month has been marked by overwhelming suffering, heartache and loss, both in Lebanon and in Israel. The draft resolution is refreshingly clear that this tragedy began six years after Israel withdrew completely from Lebanon and Hizbollah crossed an international boundary, captured and killed Israeli soldiers and began firing thousands of rockets into Israeli cities. Hizbollah and its sponsors have brought devastation upon the people of Lebanon, dragging them into a war that they did not choose and exploiting them as human shields.

The people of the Middle East have lived too long at the mercy of extremists. It is time to build a more hopeful future. The draft resolution shows us the way. It is now the solemn responsibility of the international community to help the people of Lebanon and the people of Israel to transform this tragedy into opportunity — an opportunity to overcome old patterns

of violence and to build a new foundation for stable, sustainable and comprehensive peace.

We have embarked upon an ambitious course. Yet it is the right course. It is the only realistic and effective course, and we must see it through, for it is the only way to help the people of Lebanon, the people of Israel and all the people of the Middle East secure the lasting peace that they both desire and deserve.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France.

Mr. Douste-Blazy (France) (*spoke in French*): Finally, the Security Council is deciding to put an end to the war in Lebanon and Israel. Finally, it is putting an end to the destruction, to the plight of hundreds of thousands of displaced people on both sides of the border, to an economic and humanitarian situation that has grown more and more tragic with each passing day. Today, the international community is shouldering its responsibilities; we are shouldering our responsibilities. Certainly, the time spent in negotiations seemed, for some, to delay the moment of decision, but for France and for the entire Security Council, it was a matter of reaching a long-term comprehensive and political solution.

Since the beginning of the conflict, France has called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a lifting of the blockade imposed on Lebanese ports and airports, and the return of displaced civilians. We must then create the conditions for a way out of the crisis so that we can swiftly achieve a lasting ceasefire. The stability and equilibrium not only of Lebanon and Israel, but of the entire region, depend on it.

The settlement on which we have worked must, as the President of the French Republic has emphasized, respect a twofold imperative. It must allow Lebanon's sovereignty to be restored throughout its entire territory and it must guarantee Israel's right to security.

France has played a very active part in the search for a solution. France is linked to Lebanon by deep historical and cultural ties and by strong and ongoing relations with the countries of the region. We are also very attached to the sovereignty and the independence of that country. On the strength of that imperative and of our close ties with all the actors, France wishes to reaffirm Israel's right to security.

It is from that perspective, too, and in that spirit that France worked intensively with its partners, including the United States — which I would like to thank for its support, and in particular Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice — to craft a draft resolution that takes all of those elements into account.

Decisive elements have come into play that have enabled the present result. The Council of Ministers of Lebanon announced its intention to deploy its army in southern Lebanon with the support of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). France welcomed that initiative, which it deems to be a major event. It is an historic turning point for that country.

The deployment of Lebanon's army is an essential element for restoring the sovereignty and authority of Lebanon throughout its entire territory. Furthermore, that decision meets a recurrent demand of the international community that is reiterated in many resolutions. We were duty-bound to respect that decision. It was our responsibility to take note of it.

Both Lebanon and Israel submitted certain demands to us. They shared certain expectations with us. France heeded them and the international community responded to them. That is the thrust of today's draft resolution. That seems to us the best guarantee for a lasting ceasefire and for a long-term solution.

The main thing, first of all, is to secure a cessation of hostilities and to immediately start a process that will lead to the deployment of the Lebanese army in the South, with the assistance of a reinforced UNIFIL. That will occur concomitantly with the gradual, progressive withdrawal of the Israeli army south of the Blue Line. It is also essential to begin resolving border issues, particularly that of the Sheba'a farms. That question goes to the heart of the conflict. For the first time, today's draft resolution starts a process, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, to address that question. In that respect, the Security Council has taken due note of the seven-point plan of Mr. Siniora.

Finally, we wanted to set down from this moment the principles and elements of a lasting ceasefire and a comprehensive political solution. Through today's draft resolution, the Security Council is responding to the request of the Lebanese authorities that UNIFIL be strengthened by a proposed 15,000 servicemen. I should like on this occasion to pay solemn tribute to the United Nations personnel in Lebanon who have

demonstrated self-denial and courage in this crisis, some of whom, unfortunately, have paid with their lives for their devotion to the cause of peace.

I should like to make it clear that the mandate that the Security Council is giving UNIFIL is not one that imposes peace. UNIFIL will help the Lebanese Government in several of its missions, including the deployment of its army to the South, humanitarian assistance to the people and assistance to help displaced persons return. It will also be responsible for monitoring the cessation of hostilities, and then for observing compliance by the parties with the permanent ceasefire and the Blue Line.

We call upon all the parties to strictly respect the personnel, equipment and premises of the United Nations, whose security must be guaranteed in all circumstances. France, finally, believes it crucial that many countries respond favourably and expeditiously to the request of the Lebanese authorities by contributing to a reinforced UNIFIL. France is already present in UNIFIL and will consider, alongside its European partners, the possible supplementary support that it may be able to give to the Force.

I express the hope that today will be the first day of restored peace and stability in the Middle East. It is important that what the Security Council is offering Lebanon today, the international community offer the Palestinian people in the future. The lives and the hope of millions of people who are counting on us are at stake. At stake, too, is the future of an entire region that has suffered too much and must find peace once again. The message of the international community is clear. We need to replace a culture of hatred, mistrust and rejection with a culture of trust, mindfulness and dialogue.

The President: I now call on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani.

Sheikh Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegations of France and the United States for their recent efforts to improve the language of the draft resolution submitted by them to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East.

While thanking them for taking into consideration some of the important points that we have raised regarding the substance of the draft resolution, I reaffirm our position that, for the sake of stopping the bloodshed of innocents, the Security Council should have adopted a resolution providing for an immediate ceasefire from the very first day of the current hostilities and should have dealt with other questions subsequently.

However, that conviction does not necessarily indicate our satisfaction with the adoption of a draft resolution that lacks balance and overlooks the accumulated, complicated historical, social and geopolitical factors that have culminated in the current situation in the region. The draft resolution fails to adequately take into consideration the interests, unity, stability and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Therefore, we still have some comments regarding the draft resolution.

The draft resolution does not clearly and explicitly address the horrors of destruction caused by the Israeli aggression against innocent civilians and the Lebanese infrastructure. Moreover, it does not clearly spell out Israel's legal and humanitarian responsibility for that destruction or address in a balanced manner the question of the Lebanese prisoners, detainees and abducted persons in Israeli prisons, despite the fact that the exchange of prisoners and detainees is the logical and realistic way to settle this question.

Nevertheless, we have accepted the draft resolution in its present form in order to stop the bloodshed of innocents and to spare Lebanon and the region further horror and destruction.

It is our understanding that, once the draft resolution is adopted, it obligates both parties to halt hostilities and provides for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, and that any breaches committed between the end of hostilities and the achievement of withdrawal and a ceasefire will be governed by the April Understanding of 1996. In addition, the draft resolution will lead to the reopening of the Lebanese ports and airports and the return of the displaced persons to their homes immediately upon its adoption. It is also our understanding that the draft resolution assigns sole responsibility to the Lebanese Government for dealing with the armed phenomena in the South and that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani river is subject to the exclusive control of the Lebanese Government.

We welcome the fact that the draft resolution is limited to augmenting the United Nations Interim

Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), that its mandate will continue to be subject to the provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter, and that, as I have been assured by the sponsors of the draft, any reference to international forces in the draft resolution means UNIFIL. On this occasion, we call upon the contributing States or those States that intend to contribute to UNIFIL to dispatch their forces promptly.

Furthermore, it is our understanding that the Secretary-General will urgently take all the necessary measures to settle the question of the Sheba'a farms in accordance with the provisions of the seven-point plan endorsed by the Lebanese Government in that regard. We are convinced that it is still possible for the Council to play an effective and substantive role in settling this crisis. We will work with peace-loving States in following up this question in the interest of security and stability in Lebanon.

I would like to single out paragraph 18 of the draft resolution, which stresses the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Failure to deal effectively and objectively with this crisis and its root causes has led to a great deal of turbulence and tension in the region, and this has manifested itself in the events unfolding in Lebanon and in Palestine. We have all witnessed — and, regrettably, continue to witness — the continued aggression against Gaza and its inhabitants.

I wish particularly to inform the Council that the Council of the League of Arab States has unanimously adopted a decision to resubmit the question of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Security Council, now that everyone has recognized the failure of the peace process in its present form. All of the Arab States will submit an official request for the convening of a high-level meeting of the Security Council next September in order to agree on a new track towards the establishment of a just peace in the region within a set time frame.

The Security Council bears a major responsibility towards millions in the region whose lives and future are threatened by the conflict, which is turning their lives into an inferno. The Council must discharge that responsibility effectively, justly and fully.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/2006/640) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall now put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, China, Congo, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1701 (2006).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

I call on Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Ms. Bakoyannis (Greece): For the past month the world has borne witness to another tragic chapter in the history of the Middle East, an unbearable addition to the pain of that long-suffering region. The images of helpless children and mothers, wounded, sick and despondent victims on either side of the conflict, untold destruction and unimaginable pain, have haunted all of us. This has shown once more how much we, as an international community, have failed the hopes and dreams and aspirations of those people.

Greece, from the very first moment of the outbreak of the current crisis, has called for an immediate ceasefire. War is not and cannot be the answer to anything. Violence has never solved any problem. It only serves to breed more violence and to create a new generation full of hatred, devoid of hope and keen on revenge — a nurturing field for extremism and terrorism.

The Middle East has been suffering from this never-ending cycle of vicious wars and unstable peace, broken promises, lost lives and unspeakable tragedy not for years, but for decades. History has proven time and again that neither victory on the battlefield nor blind violence against innocent civilians, neither suicide bombings nor Katyusha rockets, have ever solved, or ever will solve, the problems of the Middle East — or any other region for that matter. These are issues that need political solutions brought about through diplomatic means, in a spirit of compromise, mutual respect and acceptance.

The resolution we have just adopted here today is trying to do precisely that. It offers the basis for a

political solution to this long-lasting — and, admittedly, extremely difficult and complex — problem. It also offers the framework for a political process with concrete goals and specific benchmarks and time frames.

Full respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon is the first and foremost of those benchmarks. Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006) must be fully implemented. After all, it is a matter of principle that all Security Council resolutions must be fully respected and properly implemented.

In the past two years, the international community has done exceptional work in ridding Lebanon of any foreign presence. It is therefore not conceivable that it would accept foreign occupation of any part of Lebanese national territory. Occupation by any foreign force, anywhere in the world, is not admissible in any way or on any pretext. It is imperative for the Lebanese Government to take effective and immediate control of Lebanese territory in its entirety through the withdrawal of the Israeli military forces and the deployment of the Lebanese army. It is also imperative to proceed, as soon as possible, with the delineation of the international borders of Lebanon, including Sheba'a farms. The Secretary-General, in presenting his proposals, should take into consideration the seven points of the Siniora plan.

At the same time, Israel's legitimate security concerns are well understood and need to be properly addressed. We continue, though, to believe that, while preserving the right of self-defence, Israel must respect its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.

We see today's resolution as a first, but very important, step towards a lasting and sustainable peace. We are fully aware that a lot remains to be done. We need to make sure that this resolution is fully implemented. The bloodshed has to stop, and it has to stop now. The bombings have to stop, and they have to stop now. The suffering of the civilians has to stop, and it has to stop now.

Greece responded immediately to the enormous humanitarian effort under way in Lebanon. But the ongoing hostilities hamper our ability to reach those most in need and to alleviate their pain.

Now that the end of hostilities is hopefully in sight, we stand ready, together with the rest of the international community, and especially the countries of the region, to help in the enormous effort for the reconstruction of a shattered country, the immediate return of refugees to their homes and, hopefully, the dawn of a new day over both Lebanon and Israel.

It is in that respect that this resolution deserves our support and, even more important, deserves our commitment to work very hard in the coming days on the crucial steps that need to follow if we want our efforts to bring tangible results and not end in one more disappointing failure.

It is in that spirit that we call upon all parties to set aside their fears and disappointments and, difficult as it might be, to make the necessary commitment and effort to overcome the current crisis and build a better future for their peoples.

At this particularly critical juncture in the history of the Middle East, we must not lose sight of the bigger picture and allow ourselves to forget the suffering and the plight of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. The question of Palestine, central to the whole Middle East conflict, should be addressed with the utmost urgency. As long as the Palestine issue remains unresolved, it is clear that there will be no peace in the region.

We must strive to create, as soon as possible, the necessary conditions for the genuine and earnest re-launching of a peace process for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), as well as on the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace, for the sake of the people in all of the region.

The President: I call now on Her Excellency Mrs. Margaret Beckett, M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Beckett (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom very much welcomes the adoption of this resolution. Its objectives are clear: to bring about full cessation of hostilities, to create the space for an urgent humanitarian relief effort and to begin a process leading to a permanent ceasefire and a durable peace. That last point is crucial. It is why it has taken long and

intensive negotiations to arrive at today's decision. We needed to achieve a resolution that looked beyond the short term and held out the prospect of a lasting solution. That meant agreeing upon a text that took sufficient account of the positions of both parties: the sovereign and elected Governments of Lebanon and of Israel. That was not straightforward; it has taken time and effort. But the United Kingdom firmly believes it was the right thing to do.

The resolution underlines the international community's determination to support the Lebanese people and Government in making a new start, for there can be no going back to the way things were. We have seen the tragic consequences of that all too clearly in the past weeks: hundreds of dead — mostly civilians — thousands wounded and hundreds of thousands displaced. We grieve for and with them, and we offer our condolences to the Governments of Lebanon and of Israel, and to the families of all those affected, for the losses they have suffered. Such tragedies must not be repeated, and we will do all we can to help Lebanon move forward to live in peace and prosperity with all its neighbours.

The immediate priority is to address the humanitarian crisis. United Nations agencies have been working tirelessly, but have faced extremely difficult conditions on the ground. We hope a full cessation of hostilities will allow for rapid expansion of those efforts and those of other relief organizations and bilateral donors; the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will have an important role to play in that regard.

The United Kingdom will play its full part. We are taking immediate steps to provide practical and other support for the Government of Lebanon. The British team of humanitarian experts and experts in post-conflict reconstruction has been in Lebanon, and Prime Minister Blair has been in touch with Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora about ways in which the United Kingdom can support the recovery effort. The United Kingdom is contributing £6.2 million to meet priority relief needs in Lebanon. Most of that will be channelled through United Nations agencies. We will also support the Red Cross and a number of non-governmental organizations, whose role will be critical.

Faced with a crisis, the international community is often generous in its response. But that very generosity can pose a challenge of coordination. So we are grateful to the United Nations for the leading role it is playing on that front. We urge all parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that humanitarian relief workers can go about their life-saving business without hindrance or fear of attack.

At the heart of this resolution is the need to pursue the twin objectives of Lebanese sovereignty and Israeli security. We cannot achieve one unless we guarantee the other. And that is why this resolution sets out a framework for establishing peace, security and stability in southern Lebanon on the basis of extending the Government of Lebanon's control throughout its territory and, in particular, through implementation of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006). For far too long, Lebanon has suffered from occupation, interference and conflict, and it is the civilian population, both in Lebanon and in Israel, which has suffered most. As Prime Minister Siniora has said, this must now end.

But we must also see an end to Hizbollah's random attacks continually directed against Israeli civilians. No country can accept its citizens having to live under the shadow of rockets fired from across the border. Hizbollah faces a historic choice: whether to continue on the path of violence and destruction or to support the aspirations of the Lebanese people for a peaceful future through a political path which is itself a path of peace.

To implement this resolution we look first and foremost to all the parties to respect its terms. But we also look to those with influence to play their part. Hizbollah's backers, notably Syria and Iran, must now consider their positions — whether they want to work with the rest of the international community to build a peaceful future in the region or to oppose those efforts, at a high cost to the region and ultimately to themselves. I look to their leaders now to give full support, both to this resolution and to resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), including by denying support for continued warfare to Hizbollah and refraining from other actions that destabilize the region.

And I cannot make such an observation without referring to the recent remarks about Israel by the President of Iran. Such comments are wholly unacceptable in themselves, and they have the capacity to promote further violence.

Our chief focus today is inevitably on the crisis in Lebanon. But we must, at all costs, as a number of

colleagues have said, not lose sight also of the situation in Gaza, where violence continues to take a heavy toll and where the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people — itself compounded by conflict — continues to cause great concern.

We reiterate our full support for President Abbas and others who are working to resolve the current situation, and we offer our condolences to Palestinians on their losses. Real peace throughout the Middle East can come only on the basis of a lasting, comprehensive settlement. As our Prime Minister said in his speech in Los Angeles on 1 August, we need a new strategy for the Middle East, one that tackles extremism and promotes moderation and reconciliation. Our priority must be to create the conditions for an early resumption of negotiations based on the Quartet road map. There is no military solution to these problems. Negotiation is the only viable way to bring peace and prosperity to the people throughout the Middle East.

Our own Prime Minister has announced this evening his intention to visit the region, in particular Israel and Palestine, over the coming period, and to consult those there — and, of course, members of the Quartet — on what might be the best way forward.

The step we are taking in this resolution today, to bring peace to Lebanon, must be part of a larger process to bring peace to all of the people of the region as a whole. The United Kingdom will do all it can to help bring this about.

The President: I call now on Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, His Excellency.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): For four weeks, we have witnessed a violent conflict between Israel and Hizbollah, causing untold suffering and devastation on both sides. I am deeply shocked by the unacceptably high number of casualties among innocent civilians. Almost one million people have fled their homes in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.

In order to stop further human suffering and pave the way for a negotiated political solution, the hostilities must end immediately. There is no military solution to this crisis. To the contrary, further violence and combat will only fuel the hatred and fanaticism that have obstructed a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict for so long. We must not let the extremists win and set the agenda for the future.

Intense diplomatic efforts have been carried out in recent weeks by all parties around this table in order to reach a solution. I am convinced that this resolution is the necessary and indispensable step towards the cessation of the hostilities, a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict.

There are several parties responsible for this conflict. Hizbollah is the main cause. We have also called on Syria and Iran to act responsibly and on Israel to show the utmost restraint and to avoid disproportionate action, and have warned it against destroying Lebanon in its fight against Hizbollah.

We mourn the deaths of innocent men, women and children. Our hearts go out to their bereaved families and to the peoples of Lebanon and Israel. The cruelty of war reminds us of our common obligation to maintain international peace and security and to seek solutions by peaceful means to all conflicts. I believe that it is high time to look forward and finally to lay the foundations for a stable and durable peace in that troubled region.

We urge the Governments of Lebanon and Israel to agree to the principles and elements mentioned in the resolution in order to arrive at a long-term solution. We pledge our full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard and stand ready to assist wherever possible.

We cannot and must not return to the status quo ante. The root causes of the conflict should be addressed urgently. As long as armed forces outside the control of the Government operate in and from Lebanon, instability will prevail.

Denmark stands firmly behind Prime Minister Siniora in Beirut and the fragile Lebanese democracy. The overriding challenge is to safeguard a stable and democratic future for Lebanon and to avoid the strengthening of extremism in general in the region.

One of the main objectives of today's resolution is to ensure the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon in line with resolution 1559 (2004). With a view to achieving those goals, Denmark welcomes the decision of the Government of Lebanon to deploy 15,000 troops in southern Lebanon and supports the enhancement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operations.

The humanitarian efforts carried out by the United Nations and other relief organizations have been essential in saving human lives. It is imperative that they be guaranteed safety and unhindered access. Denmark has contributed to those efforts and to the humanitarian appeal from the United Nations, and we stand ready to extend further assistance.

In conclusion, we have today taken an important first step in trying to end this bloody and senseless conflict. To break the logic of war and replace it with the logic of peace, we have now endorsed a road map for a long-term solution. To get there, however, we are dependent on the political will and strength of all parties. The international community can and must facilitate and support, but in the end, only the parties can make the peace, and they must do so to the benefit of the citizens of their countries. They deserve it. I urge them to do so.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We wish to welcome you, Sir, and to thank you for personally presiding over today's meeting. We would also like to welcome Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the foreign ministers who are participating in this meeting.

Since the Lebanon-Israel conflict broke out on 12 July, China has repeatedly called upon all the parties to the conflict to practise the utmost restraint, and has called for the immediate cessation of hostilities so as to avoid a further escalation of the situation and a greater humanitarian crisis. It has been nearly a month since the onset of the bloody Lebanon-Israel conflict, which has killed or injured thousands of innocent civilians and forced a million people to flee their homes. In the conflict, even United Nations peacekeepers have not been spared.

China condemns the excessive use of force and attacks on civilians, civilian facilities and United Nations personnel. We strongly advocate early Security Council action to achieve an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, halt the current conflict, maintain peace and stability in the Middle East, and relieve the humanitarian disaster.

After rounds of difficult negotiations by the parties concerned, the Security Council has finally reached consensus on the resolution on the conflict in the Middle East. In the course of consultations, China repeatedly emphasized that any Security Council resolution and framework of settlement must respect and reflect the concerns of all parties involved, especially the concerns of Lebanon and the Arab countries. We believe that the resolution before us, integrating the seven-point proposal of the Lebanese Government, embodies some important elements, including its calls for a full cessation of hostilities and for the Lebanese Government to deploy its armed forces throughout the South, together with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), as the Israeli army withdraws behind the Blue Line.

The resolution also lays out detailed provisions for the new mandates of UNIFIL. Those provide a good foundation for future efforts to achieve long-term political solutions to the Lebanon-Israel issue. We note that Lebanon, Israel and the Arab countries hold no objections to the resolution. Given the above considerations, China voted in favour of resolution 1701 (2006).

The adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) is just the first step, and the parties concerned face more arduous tasks. China hopes that the parties will earnestly implement the resolution and, in particular, assisted by Secretary-General Annan, reach consensus at an early date on a comprehensive, lasting and fair framework for the political settlement of the conflict and restore local peace and stability as soon as possible. At the same time, the international community should step up its urgent humanitarian relief efforts for Lebanon and help the Lebanese people to rebuild their homeland.

Finally, I take this opportunity to emphasize that, while focusing attention on the Lebanon-Israel conflict, the international community should not neglect or forget the ongoing sufferings of the Palestinian people. We hope that, with the joint efforts of Israel and the Arab countries, and on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace, the Middle East peace process will be revitalized and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace achieved in the Middle East at an early date.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Slovakia, as one of the sponsors of resolution 1701 (2006), voted in favour of it because we believe that it provides an important basis for a full cessation of hostilities, for ending the

suffering of civilians in Lebanon and Israel, and for starting the process of a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Lebanese crisis. We consider the resolution to be the first step in addressing fully and urgently all causes that have led to the current crisis.

We are convinced that there is no military solution to the Lebanese crisis, just as there is no military solution to the Middle East conflict in general. In that regard, we urge all parties to abide by the resolution and immediately to stop the hostilities and violence and to reach an agreement on a permanent ceasefire. In our view, a lasting solution can be reached only through peaceful negotiations and the full implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

We support the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. To that end, we believe that they can be best achieved through the full implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), enabling the Government of Lebanon to assume full control over all its territory. That also means taking appropriate measures against the illegal movement of arms and people across its borders and against illegal attacks on the territory of neighbouring States. The international community should assist the Lebanese Government to achieve that goal.

In that regard, we believe that it is necessary to take all steps to expeditiously enhance the strength and mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in order to allow it to cope efficiently and effectively with the tasks envisaged by the resolution. Slovakia is ready to contribute to enhancing UNIFIL's capacities.

Finally, it is of the utmost importance for the international community to take immediate steps to address the extremely difficult humanitarian situation of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons and to assist in their return home.

In conclusion, we would like to underline that this resolution cannot be a substitute for agreement by the parties on the basic principles of a long-term and lasting solution. In that respect, we call once again on all parties to extend their full cooperation in achieving a sustainable and lasting solution to the Lebanese crisis.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spo Russian*): Another tragic chapter of the history Middle East conflict has now been written. For a month, before the eyes of the entire world, i civilians in Lebanon and Israel have been dy hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens hav forced to abandon their homes. Serious dama been done to Lebanon's civilian infrastr Personnel of the United Nations Interim Fo Lebanon (UNIFIL) have been in an extremely d situation and have suffered casualties.

These wounds will take a long time to h both in Lebanon and in the memory of the community. From the very first days o confrontation between Israel and Lebanon, Rus insisted on an immediate ceasefire to prevent casualties and to bring an end to suffering amo civilian population both in Lebanon and in Israel

We are convinced that the prime cause tragedy that has unfolded in Lebanon, and broad-scale humanitarian disaster, was not sol train of events with which we are all familiar, b the lack of a comprehensive settlement in the East. It is possible that similar events will cont shake the Middle East until decisive action is t resolve the region's fundamental problems. context, it is increasingly essential to eng comprehensive consideration of all aspects Middle East situation, without exception, on th of the relevant resolutions of the Security Counc

It took an unjustifiably long time to dr Council resolution we have just adopted. Rus everything it could to accelerate the process, b our contacts with the parties and around the nego table. It was this that guided us when we propos draft resolution yesterday, calling for a humar ceasefire in Lebanon and for urgent diplomatic to resolve the crisis.

But, as it proved possible today to prod agreed text of a broader Security Council resolution on Lebanon, the Russian Federation c to support that text. It reflects Russia's key dem an immediate cessation hostilities, it takes into a the legitimate demands of Lebanon and it m provisions that meet the security interests of Isr call upon the parties to show the necessary p will and strictly follow the course of action outl the resolution.

For its part, Russia will continue steadfastly to promote the achievement of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, pursuant to the decisions taken by the Security Council.

The President: I call next on the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country supported and voted in favour of the draft resolution we have just adopted, essentially because the priority in this conflict was and remains to declare an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to violent confrontation. That has been my country's position ever since the outbreak of this crisis between Israel and Lebanon on 12 July, and we have unequivocally stated that at all relevant meetings of the Security Council and in other international forums.

We regret that the Council took a full month to react in the face of this conflict and to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter. As I have said, our chief concern throughout the conflict has been and remains the fate of the civilian population. The figures reveal eloquently that it is innocent civilians, both Lebanese and Israeli, who have most suffered the consequences of the violence. International humanitarian law establishes clear obligations for the parties with respect to the protection of civilians. The principles of proportionality and differentiation must be respected in all circumstances. For that reason, Argentina has vigorously denounced all violations of international humanitarian law and of human rights that have taken place in the course of the conflict. We call once again for an immediate end to all attacks on civilian populations.

We now hope that the parties to the conflict will take immediate steps to facilitate access by humanitarian aid agencies to southern Lebanon and to guarantee the safety and freedom of movement of humanitarian aid workers. In the light of the particular social and cultural characteristics of Lebanon, we consider that among the top priorities should be to provide assistance enabling internally displaced persons to return to their homes as soon as possible.

It must be stated that the adoption of this resolution should not be seen as the end of the road, but rather as the beginning of a process that must take us to a solution of the underlying problems that led to this crisis. Here, we are convinced that additional efforts must be made to fully implement all of the Council's decisions, in particular resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006).

With regard to the implementation of today's resolution, we believe that it is a priority to accelerate preparations for the deployment of additional troops to strengthen the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon so that Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory can take place as soon as possible. We are confident that there will be significant contributions of troops over the next few days.

With respect to the proposals to be developed by the Secretary-General in pursuance of paragraph 10 of the resolution, we would ask him to take into account the seven-point plan adopted by the Lebanese Cabinet, in particular with regard to the Sheba'a farms, as also set out in the resolution we have adopted.

The crisis between Israel and Lebanon should not make us lose sight of the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular in the Gaza Strip. To the contrary: the two matters are very closely linked and, unfortunately, feed off each other. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is extremely grave and continues to deteriorate daily. We hope that, over the next few days, the Security Council will begin to look at this issue with a view to putting an immediate end to hostilities there as well.

Finally, let me stress once again the importance that Argentina attaches to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, prior agreements among the parties, the road map and the principle of land for peace.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): It is almost a month since the hostilities started in the Middle East, engulfing Lebanon and Israel. The fighting has caused an enormous loss of civilian life, heartrending bloodshed and the destruction of infrastructure on both sides. The suffering of people in Lebanon and Israel increases every day that the hostilities continue, and the threat to peace and security in that vital region becomes even greater as the fighting threatens to escalate. Japan therefore strongly welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) calling for a full and immediate cessation of hostilities by the parties in

conflict and for Israel and Lebanon to support a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution, based on a set of negotiated principles and elements.

We wish to thank the sponsors, in particular France and the United States, for their great efforts in producing this outcome over weeks of hard negotiations involving all the relevant parties under extremely difficult circumstances — especially, in the Council, Ambassador John Bolton of the United States and Ambassador de La Sablière of France.

The package solution contained in the resolution, being a child of political compromise reached through arduous diplomatic exchanges, can satisfy no party 100 per cent. But it does represent a significant step forward, providing a viable framework for an immediate ceasefire and the avoidance of further civilian casualties and destruction, which the international community has been calling for since the onset of the crisis, and for a sustainable solution to the complex problems that have beset the region of southern Lebanon for a long time — if it is backed up with the necessary political will and commitment of all the parties concerned and supported by the international community. In other words, the faithful and complete implementation of the resolution is now of vital importance, and we call on the Governments of Lebanon and Israel and all the concerned parties, based on the resolution, to bring about an immediate ceasefire, to use the utmost restraint, to start implementing the agreed political framework and to exert the maximum effort to restore calm and stability in the region.

We are also deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation, particularly in Lebanon. It is imperative to create the necessary environment for Lebanon, with support from the international community, to address the problems of internally displaced persons in their hundreds and thousands, and of refugees in the neighbouring countries, as well as the rehabilitation of the country at the earliest possible date. Here, I pay tribute to all the humanitarian organizations and workers and all observers and troops of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for their perseverance and dedication.

We regret that it took such a long time for the Council to act in the discharge of its responsibility on this matter. Noting the delay in action, however, does not diminish our appreciation of the sponsors. The delay was not due to any lack of will or effort on their part, or on the part of any member of the Council.

Be that as it may, having come all the way to this critical juncture in dealing with the issue at hand, and recognizing the need for the Security Council to continue to act actively and in unity, Japan will continue to work and cooperate closely with the other members of the Council and the concerned countries to ensure the effective implementation of the resolution.

Finally, while we need to deal with the Israel-Lebanon conflict with all due attention and speed, we must not forget to deal with the other situations in the Middle East, in particular the Palestinian problem and the increasingly dire humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, Japan calls for a broad-based, prompt international contribution and cooperation to achieve the full implementation of the resolution. I wish to state that Japan, for its part, will continue to contribute actively to the efforts to restore peace and to promote medium- and long-term stability and reconstruction in Lebanon and the region as a whole.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We join in welcoming the foreign ministers who are here today.

We would like to thank the United States and France for their tireless efforts, which made it possible for the Security Council to vote on today's important resolution.

In a Government statement issued on 31 July, Tanzania called for an immediate ceasefire in the hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah in order to put an end to the mounting deaths and the suffering of innocent civilians and also to avert the further destruction of property and civilian infrastructure.

The Government statement urged the international community to intervene to end the bloodshed. It regretted that so many innocent civilians in Lebanon and in Israel had died and that many more were being displaced in Lebanon, and called for urgent action by the Security Council to resolve the crisis. It emphasized the need to implement resolution 1559 (2004) and deeply regretted that so much time had been spent before the Council could act.

It was with the same sense of urgency that we welcomed the efforts that made possible the resolution, which we believe creates the necessary framework for a cessation of hostilities. Our short-term objective has always been to stop further humanitarian casualties and suffering and to allow immediate humanitarian access and assistance. That is still our primary objective tonight.

Our second objective springs from the realization that a political solution to the current crisis must also be sought with urgency. In our view, any expectation that military action will bring about a political solution can only engender grave humanitarian consequences and render it considerably harder to promote a political solution, which must be preferred if sustainable peace is to be attained.

It is also our view that the Government and the entire nation of Lebanon need not be the victims of the events that triggered the current crisis — events which the United Republic of Tanzania has condemned. However, we have always believed that this crisis need not escalate further. It was therefore with a sense of relief that we received the news of the outcome of the efforts that made it possible for us to vote in favour of the resolution.

We want to commend the Government of Lebanon for its seven-point plan, which was augmented by an offer to deploy 15,000 troops in southern Lebanon to control its territory, in collaboration with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. We also commend the Government of Israel for having given that proposal due consideration.

The international community has an important role to play in support of the resolution. We commend potential troop-contributing countries and urge them to act with urgency, and we appeal for assistance for the return and resettlement of displaced persons and for the reconstruction of Lebanon.

We also believe that the resolution that has been adopted is but a first step. Its relevance and effectiveness will demand the utmost good faith of the parties. That will be critical if the present understanding is to become a building block to a broader comprehensive peace for the Middle East, and especially to a durable solution to the Palestinian question.

The President: I now call on the representative of Peru.

Mr. Pereyra Plasencia (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru voted in favour of this resolution, which calls for a complete cessation of hostilities and which we trust will mark the beginning of the end to the destruction and the violence that have claimed so many innocent lives in Lebanon and in northern Israel. That is why we urge the parties to the conflict to comply immediately and scrupulously with the cessation of hostilities for which this resolution calls. We are confident that that will enable humanitarian assistance to reach populations in need as soon as possible.

We also ask that the strengthening of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) under the terms authorized by this resolution take place as soon as possible so that the Force can, together with the Lebanese army, move in and fulfil the mandate with which it has been entrusted. That action, in parallel with the withdrawal of the Israeli army, is essential for compliance with this resolution. Likewise, we trust that the principles and elements included in this resolution with a view to a definitive solution can be addressed as soon as possible by the Governments of Lebanon and of Israel.

Finally, Peru expresses its entire willingness to continue to work constructively in the Security Council to contribute to the reaching of a definitive solution to this conflict.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana.

It is an honour for us to preside over this meeting, which has been convened this evening to adopt the resolution on Lebanon for which the world has been waiting. The anxiety that has gripped the world since the outbreak of the conflict and that has led some to accuse the Security Council of inaction can now be laid to rest. And our deepest wish is that today will mark a truly new beginning not only for the people of Israel and Lebanon, but for the entire region.

We wish to join others in expressing our profound gratitude to Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière, Permanent Representative of France, and Ambassador John Bolton, Permanent Representative of the United States of America, their Governments and their respective teams for working tirelessly to achieve the consensus that the resolution before us represents. Their dogged determination to achieve results has enabled the Council to do its duty to the peoples of the world.

The presence in our midst of United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her colleagues

from France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Denmark and the State of Qatar underscores the fact no other body can surpass the Security Council in the force of its moral authority and its sheer diplomatic clout when it acts in unity and remains faithful to its responsibilities. We expect nothing less when we come to grapple with the fundamental question of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the long-standing Middle East question. Clearly, the solution is within the grasp of the Security Council, and we must resolve to work together in a spirit of compromise to bring to a speedy end the pain and suffering of the peoples of that troubled region.

Therefore, I fully share the views of other speakers who have stressed that the adoption of this resolution should lead to the immediate cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon in order to bring prompt relief to the 1 million displaced people who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance and those who suffer the rockets and the bombing.

Beyond that, I wish to reiterate that the adoption of this resolution should also be seen, as others have also noted, as an important step in the search for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East question, the core of which is the Palestinian question. In that regard, the President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, and the Ghanaian Government intend to work closely with the other members of the Council in implementing the two-State solution, which entails an independent Palestinian State living side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders. The international community, especially the Security Council, should leave no stone unturned in tackling this problem and seeing to its successful realization.

It is for those reasons that Ghana, which has consistently supported the international consensus on this question, decided to co-sponsor the present resolution, and we are happy that it has been adopted unanimously. Ghana, as a troop contributor to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, is also happy that the resolution seeks to enhance the Force's capacity and believes that that enhancement will make a significant and positive contribution to the search for peace in the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call now on His Excellency Mr. Tarek Mitri, Minister of Culture and Special Envoy of the Council of Ministers of Lebanon.

Mr. Mitri (Lebanon): Once again, the Security Council is meeting in this Chamber. It has been one long month since the Government of Lebanon began urging — let us say passionately calling out for — a ceasefire that would end the rain of bombs that has devastated our country and end the reign of horror that Israel has visited upon our people. For a month now, as the world has continued to watch and as the international community has continued to vacillate, Israel has besieged and ravaged Lebanon, creating a humanitarian and environmental disaster and shattering our infrastructure and economy.

Israel says that this war is against Hezbollah, not against Lebanon. Actually, the Israeli strategy of terror is inflicted on all Lebanese. The indiscriminate murder of more than 1,100 Lebanese civilians, a third of them children, the massacres and the "cleansing" of villages and the wanton destruction of our infrastructure and economy are nothing short of criminal. One quarter of our population has been displaced, many of them with no homes to return to and most of them desperately low on fuel, food and medical supplies, while homes, hospitals, factories and warehouses have been demolished.

The direct cause of more than 1,000 deaths and thousands of injuries is the obscenely disproportionate and unjustifiable Israeli retaliation. There are many cases documented by human rights organizations that reveal a systematic failure by the Israeli army to distinguish between combatants and civilians. In many cases, the timing and intensity of the attack and the absence of a military target, as well as the subsequent strikes on rescuers, suggest that Israel forces deliberately targeted civilians. Even today, a few hours ago, a convoy of evacuated civilians from the city of Marjayoun, escorted by the Red Cross, was targeted, killing four and injuring 16.

After its first call for a ceasefire, the Lebanese Government offered to the Rome Conference and to the Security Council a comprehensive seven-point plan developed through a process of national consensus, which received the unanimous approval of the Lebanese Council of Ministers as well as the support of political and religious leaders and significant international support.

A ceasefire that is incomplete is not a true ceasefire. A ceasefire that by its terms cannot be implemented is no ceasefire. A ceasefire that retains for one side the right not to cease firing is not a ceasefire. Lebanon has urgently requested a ceasefire that has the possibility of being implemented so that all hostilities should immediately cease — and for good.

No one more than Lebanon wants to assure the Council that we will not be here again in six weeks, six months or even six years. The persistent invasions of Lebanon demonstrate Israel's continuing belief that military actions will remedy the causes of crisis in the region. This pattern of invasions demonstrates the continuing threat facing Lebanon and the need for a political solution rooted in international law, not the result of the use of force — a solution that will lead to long-term stability, as set forth in our seven-point plan.

The people and the Government of Lebanon are deeply appreciative of the efforts of so many in the international community, most significantly, the efforts of the Secretary-General and the members of the Council, who have been working to bring to an immediate end the ravaging of Lebanon. We acknowledge all the valuable work expended by many countries to reach a viable agreement. We appreciate the genuine impatience of many with regard to the delay in reaching agreement on the resolution. Proposals to have a humanitarian truce were a case in point. More important, we are grateful for the support extended to our country and for the support that will accompany us as we, hopefully, rise up from the ruins, reconstruct and heal our injured country.

We appreciate the Security Council's acknowledgment of the Sheba'a farms problem. We hope that the Security Council and the Secretary-General will, in the period ahead, take the necessary steps to resolve that issue, thereby removing one of the underlying causes of the conflict.

I am sure that Council members understand that the Lebanese are eager to see a true cessation of hostilities and expect a strong determination on the Council's part to bring it about immediately. The Lebanese, to be frank, are not confident in the Israeli distinction between what is "defensive" and what is "offensive". The end to military operations should be unqualified.

The lifting of the blockade should also be immediate upon cessation of hostilities. The consequences of the blockade so far have been such that the international community cannot allow the humanitarian crisis to continue one more moment. Humanitarian aid has been prevented from reaching people in desperate need. Even today, Israel continues to fire upon convoys of people attempting to reach safety and help.

Our Government has decided to deploy the Lebanese armed forces in southern Lebanon as the sole military force, assisted by United Nations forces, the moment Israel starts pulling back to the international borders. To be sure, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will have to play the determining role that is defined by this resolution. Let me pay tribute here to the UNIFIL personnel for all they have done for the sake of peace and for all that has been done to them.

To be sure, as I have said, UNIFIL will have to play the determining role that is defined in this resolution. The Government of Lebanon therefore urgently calls on the troop-contributing countries to act swiftly on the strengthening and enhancement of UNIFIL, to enable it to perform its duties as stipulated in the resolution just adopted: to assist, support and accompany the Lebanese population and Lebanese armed forces and to monitor not just the cessation of hostilities but also the ceasefire.

For any political solution to move forward, it must address the root causes of this war, including the continued Israeli occupation of Sheba'a farms and the perennial threat to Lebanon's security, as well as Lebanon's struggle to regain full sovereignty over all its territory. We believe that a political resolution rooted in international law and based on the seven-point plan will lead to long-term stability.

The international community has a moral and political obligation under the terms of the Charter of the United Nations and the accepted norms of international law to defend Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to protect the Lebanese people under the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention and its Protocols, which Israel has repeatedly and wilfully violated.

If Israel were to realize that the peoples of the Middle East cannot be cowed into submission and that they aspire only to live in freedom and dignity, this could also be a stepping stone to a final solution of the

wider Arab-Israeli conflict which has plagued our region for 60 years. The 2002 Arab Summit in Beirut, which called for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on the principle of land for peace is the way forward. A political solution cannot, however, be implemented as long as Israel continues to occupy Arab land in Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Golan Heights and wages war on innocent people.

The Lebanese Council of Ministers will convene urgently tomorrow to consider this important resolution. We value the attention as well as the decisions of the Security Council, which is entrusted with preserving international security and peace. It is essential that the Security Council act immediately to put an end to the Israeli onslaught on Lebanon.

For the people of Lebanon today, as they look into the future, the stakes could not be higher. That is also the case, I believe, for the world. Success in bringing peace and stability to Lebanon is a sign of the ability and resolve of the international community to assure the peoples of the world that a just peace can prevail.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the Foreign Ministers who have honoured us with their presence here today. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the members of the Security Council for the long hours and hard work they have invested in this endeavour. I would like especially to commend Ambassadors John Bolton and Jean-Marc de La Sablière for their determination and commitment.

Today, but for the grace of God and the alertness of the British security authorities, we could have been sitting here in the aftermath of a terrorist atrocity greater even than 9/11. The world would have mourned, but in the streets of Tehran, Damascus and parts of Lebanon, there would have been rejoicing, just as there was after 9/11. Mercifully, the plan was foiled. But the threat, and the genocidal ideology that inspired it, remains.

It is that same genocidal ideology, it is that same fanatical terrorism, that Israel has been confronting in Lebanon for the past month and that the Security Council is asked to address today.

For the past month, Israel has been confronting this vile phenomenon as it expresses itself in our region. But the threat we have been facing is not limited to our region; it has set its sights on the world at large. The terrorists in our region have a gruesome record of diabolical invention in perpetrating their atrocities, but these heinous innovations have been quick to cross borders and continents. Hostage-taking, suicide-bombings and hijackings know no boundaries, as many States represented at this table, among them Argentina, Britain, Greece, Japan, Qatar, Russia and the United States, know only too well. Not only are the countries of the West their targets, but also the moderate regimes in our region, which offer hope of progress and prosperity and the basic freedoms to which the terrorists are so fundamentally opposed.

The stakes could not be higher. Yesterday's foiled plot is a wake-up call that the campaign of terror, motivated by fanatical intent and backed by lethal weapons of destruction, is not limited to any region, but threatens the whole world. The tragedy we have seen in our region over the past weeks, it tells us, is but a preview of the coming attraction, produced by Iran, directed by Syria, acted by terrorist groups, soon to be seen in a theatre near you. Whether we will succeed in defeating this threat depends, in large part, on the resolve we demonstrate today.

It is often said, "Where there's a will, there's a way". But recent years have demonstrated that where there is a way, there is not always a will. The way to avoid the crisis between Israel and Lebanon has been clear: implementation of the unconditional obligations set out in resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which set out issues for resolution between Lebanon and Syria. The clear path forward required the disarming and disbanding of Hizbollah and other militias, and the exercise by Lebanon, like any sovereign State, of control and authority over all its territory. But the will to implement this way has been lacking, and over the past month the peoples of Israel and Lebanon have paid a heavy price for that inaction.

In the face of the failure to ensure that the obligations set out in those resolutions were implemented, Israel has had no choice but to do what Lebanon has failed to do. As a result, Hizbollah's lethal capabilities have been dealt a major blow: bases have been dismantled and stockpiles of Iranian missiles have been destroyed. Southern Lebanon has been substantially cleared of the infrastructure of terrorism, and the terrorists and their sponsors have learned that a

campaign of brutal terrorism will meet with the forceful response it deserves.

But after six years of inaction which has enabled Hizbollah to serve foreign interests and to dig itself deeply into Lebanese soil, there is much yet to be done. Israel, like any State, has the right and the duty to defend its citizens from Hizbollah's unprovoked attacks, to bring its captive soldiers home and to continue its efforts to complete the task of rooting out the terrorists and removing the threat they present to the Israeli and Lebanese peoples. However, Israel is ready to respond to the calls of the Council and to give another chance to the Government of Lebanon and the international community to create a new reality on the ground.

The responsibility which this resolution places on the international community cannot be overstated. The tragedy of the past month could, and would, have been avoided if the previous resolutions of the Security Council had been heeded and their provisions fully implemented in all their parts. The resolution adopted today is an opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past and to create a genuine new reality in our region. It establishes a binding arms embargo requiring all States to prevent the supply of arms and weapons to militias and terrorists in Lebanon. It provides for a radically different international force with a mandate and the capability to use all necessary means in order to create a new situation in Lebanon in which the borders will be secure, in which Hizbollah will not be rearmed and south Lebanon will be free of armed militias and weapons. It sets out arrangements to ensure that, finally, Lebanese armed forces will deploy throughout Lebanese territory, including along the Blue Line. And it calls for the unconditional release of our boys, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. I hope that the Security Council will do all it can to make this happen, and I urge the Council to do so.

But a resolution alone will not do anything; it will do nothing. Unless the tools set out in this resolution are used with resolve and decisiveness, we will be back at this table — if not in a week, then in a month or a year — facing an even greater tragedy. For then, the terrorists, supplied, no doubt, with even more lethal weapons by Iran, will be even further emboldened by yet another demonstration of our lack of commitment and will.

Today's resolution brings to an end weeks of intensive negotiations. But it is not the end of the task; indeed, it is only the beginning. We need to seize this moment and open a new chapter for the region, a chapter in which moderation is not seen as weakness, and a hand stretched out in peace is not perceived as one raised in surrender.

The stakes could not be higher for Lebanon and Israel, or for the region as a whole. These last few weeks have given us a chilling glimpse of what our region could be like if Iran were to succeed in achieving its goal of adding weapons of mass destruction to its lethal arsenal. But in two important resolutions adopted by the Council today and last month, Iran has been sent a clear message: it cannot develop weapons to threaten the region on its own territory, and it cannot fight proxy wars on the territory of others.

President Ahmadinejad of Iran, from whom Hizbollah draws its genocidal ideology, has stated his dogma clearly: "There is nothing more beautiful, holier or more eternal than the death of a martyr". Today more than ever, a united and determined response is required from those who believe that there is nothing more beautiful, holier or more eternal than a child able to grow up living in security and peace.

I turn once again to my Lebanese colleague and, through him, to the Lebanese people. There is no quarrel between our peoples. We have no greater wish than to live next to a peaceful and prosperous State of Lebanon, exercising its independence and sovereign responsibilities like any other State.

The choice that faces the people of Lebanon is clear. It is a choice between those who develop agriculture and make deserts bloom and those who turn towns into bases of terror and barren land. It is a choice between those who work to advance medicine and bring health to body and limb and those who manufacture only weapons of destruction to tear limb from body. It is a choice between those who export innovation and technology and those whose only export is terror.

A few hours ago the sun set on Beirut, and in a few hours' time it will rise over Haifa. This night that bridges those two bleeding cities is the tale of two cities, two peoples and two religions. It will end the Moslem holy day and herald the Jewish sabbath, the holy day of rest and peace. May the sun rise over a new day for both our peoples, a day of peace, tolerance and

prosperity for our children and generations to come — a sabbath of peace. *Shabbat shalom.*

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5511/Corr.1

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5511th meeting

Friday, 11 August 2006, 6.30 p.m.

New York

Corrigendum

Page 6, first column

The third complete paragraph should read as follows:

> "The draft resolution also offers a way forward to implement resolution 1680 (2006), which addresses the delineation of the Lebanese border, including the Sheba'a farms. We must ensure Israel's security and respect the underlying framework to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with resolution 242 (1967)."

06-46769 (E)